Mr. Speaker, I thank my

friend, the gentleman from California

(Mr. LANTOS), who has been supportive

every step of the way.

It has been a long road. Two years

ago, when we sat down in my office and

drafted this bill, we could hardly have

dreamed the overwhelming support

that this bill would have picked up, bipartisan

support, I might add, in both

the House and the Senate. In the previous

Congress, the 107th Congress, I

approached the then majority leader,

Mr. Armey, about sponsoring this bill

with me, and he very graciously agreed

to do so. Our sponsors in the other

body were Senator SANTORUM and Senator

BOXER, and they, in the 108th Congress,

continued to be the sponsors of

the bill. In the 108th Congress, I spoke

with my good friend and the chair of

our subcommittee, the gentlewoman

from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN), and

she joined with me in sponsoring this

bill in the 108th Congress, and it has

been a pleasure to work with her. I

want to also thank our chairman, the

gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HYDE),

and all of the people who have worked

so hard to bring this to fruition.

This is a very important bill. Syria is

prominently listed by the U.S. State

Department as a nation which supports

terror. In 1979, the U.S. State Department

put forth a list of countries

which support terrorism and Syria was

a charter member of that list. Syria

has been on that State Department

list, unabated, for 24 years, and now, in

2003, Syria is the only nation currently

on that list with which we have normal

diplomatic relations. It never made

any sense to me, it still does not, and

this bill is an important step in saying

to Syria, enough is enough. No longer

are you going to get away with supporting

terrorism. No longer are you

going to get away with your weapons of

mass destruction. No longer are you

going to get away with your occupation

and strangulation of the sovereign

nation of Lebanon and, certainly, no

longer will we allow you to get away

with allowing terrorists to cross over

your border into Iraq to do harm to

U.S. troops, and weapons crossing over

from Syria to Iraq to kill U.S. troops.

Numerous terrorist groups, including

Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Palestinian

Islamic Jihad, maintain offices or

training camps in Syria or areas of

Syrian-occupied Lebanon with impunity

under Syrian control and guidance.

Syria is in clear violation of U.N. Security

Council Resolution 1373, which

directs all states to refrain from providing

any form of support for terrorists.

Indeed, even after Secretary of

State Powell’s meeting with President

Assad earlier this year, Hamas, Islamic

Jihad, and other terrorist groups still

remain active in Damascus and all over

Syria and Lebanon.

Hezbollah is the group which killed

more than 200 U.S. Marines in Beirut 20

years ago. Hezbollah continues to attack

and wreak havoc in Israel’s northern

border. Hezbollah continues to kill

American citizens. And yet Syria continues

to play these duplicitous games.

As General Aoun, the former leader of

Lebanon, said, Syria plays a game

where she is both the arsonist and the

fireman. She starts the fire and then

helps to put it out and expects accolades.

Syria can no longer throw us

crumbs and support terrorism at the

same time and expect our accolades.

She does not deserve it.

I think it is also interesting to note,

Mr. Speaker, that several days ago the

bombings in Turkey and Istanbul, and

there were other horrible bombings

this morning, but the bombing of the

two synagogues in Istanbul the other

day were carried out by two cousins.

And the mastermind of the bombings, a

brother of one of the cousins, fled to

Syria after the bombings.

Syria, of course, is safe haven for terrorists

around the world. Now, not only

does Syria undermine regional stability

by harboring terrorist groups, its

20,000-strong occupation force has denied

Lebanon its internationally guaranteed

sovereignty and political independence.

As called for in U.N. Security

Council Resolution 520, it is time

that Lebanon is run by the Lebanese,

not by the Assad regime in Damascus.

I cannot tell you how many Lebanese

Americans have called me and called

my office and commended us for this

bill because people of Lebanese descent

in this country are tired of seeing the

stranglehold on Lebanon by Syria.

I am also concerned about Syrian efforts

to field chemical and biological

weapons in its development of longrange

ballistic missiles. Considering

the close ties Syria maintains with terrorist

organizations, Syrian weapons of

mass destruction programs are of grave

concern. At a recent hearing of our

Middle East subcommittee, the State

Department confirmed that Syria is

continuing to permit volunteers and

others to enter Iraq from Syria to attack

and kill Americans. This is totally

unacceptable.

The broad spectrum of organizations

which supports H.R. 1828 recognizes

Syria as a major destabilizing factor in

the region and see this bill as an essential

tool to send a clear message to the

Assad regime. The bill has 297 bipartisan

cosponsors in the House and 76 in

the Senate, a majority in both Houses

in both parties.

The legislation imposes a variety of

penalties upon Syria until it ends its

support of terrorism, withdraws its

armed forces from Lebanon, halts development

of weapons of mass destruction

and ballistic missiles, and stops

facilitating terrorism in Iraq and stops

allowing people to cross the border to

do harm to U.S. troops.

This act is a measured and flexible

approach to deal with the challenge

emanating from Syria. It clearly states

that we will not accept Syria’s support

of terrorism and we call for a free and

sovereign Lebanon. This is the right

step in America’s Middle East policy.

And, finally, I want to say the national

security waiver authority in this

bill, which was put in by the Senate, is

to be taken very seriously by the President;

and its provisions are not to be

waived except in instances truly affecting

the national security interest of

the United States.

Let me just say, as Syria is still supporting

terrorism, occupying Lebanon,

procuring weapons of mass destruction,

and permitting guerillas to enter Iraq

to attack and kill our troops, I want to

say to the White House that any waiver

would have to outweigh those most

dangerous transgressions.

I find it very hard to imagine what

factor would be more important to the

national security of the U.S. than

those matters. The administration

should be aware that any waiver will

be given the strictest scrutiny by Congress.

And I would hope that the President

in signing this bill would understand

that the full implementation of

this bill ought to be put into effect

right away.

Mr. Speaker, I want to

again personally thank her for being

my partner in this bill. This whole

Congress, it could not have been done

without her. And it was a pleasure to

work with her. I want to state that for

the record.

I also want to thank the gentleman

who is to my left who is my chief of

staff, Jason Steinbaum. When I say

that we wrote the bill in my office, he

is the man who did all the writing. And

I want to acknowledge his role and his

work and thank him. It is very difficult

when you have a concept and then you

want to put the concept into writing

and then you want to pass it through

all the channels that it needs to be

passed through. But as you mentioned,

our staffs do a magnificent job. We

could not do what we do if it were not

for the good work of our staff.