Mr. Speaker, a little over

a month ago, this Act came before the House

and I voted for it.

I believe that Syria’s occupation of Lebanon

and questionable policies toward terrorist

groups are reprehensible. I also believe it is

important for the Syrian government to realize

that Americans of every political stripe (including

those who, like me, opposed the U.S. invasion

of Iraq) are aware of and disapprove of

many of Syria’s actions.

I believe it is entirely appropriate for the

United States to apply political and economic

pressure on Syria to change its policies. However,

I have decided to vote against the Syria

Accountability Act tonight.

I am concerned about the increasing bellicose

statements we have been hearing from

London. I am concerned that our President

may be setting the stage for the imposition of

his vision of democracy in more and more

places, and that he may use the many findings,

senses of Congress, and statements of

policy in this Act to promote actions that are

contrary to the best interests of the United

States.

This act is filled with nonbinding provisions

that build a case against Syria, based on soft

intelligence and reasonable, but undocumented,

assumptions.

Ultimately, I fear that those provisions could

be used to build a case for a military intervention

against Syria.

For example, the bill before us contains language

that speaks of ‘‘hostile actions’’ by

Syria against U.S.-led forces in Iraq as though

this is something we firmly know to be true. It

is certainly possible that it is true. Yet there is

no conclusive evidence as to the role of the

Government of Syria in the attacks that have

been carried out against our troops in Iraq. It

is just this kind of poorly sourced insinuation

that I fear might be used to build the case for

a preemptive invasion of Syria.

It is unfortunate that the dangerous doctrine

of preemption to which President Bush so obdurately

subscribes makes members like me,

who are truly concerned about wrongdoing by

Syria, fearful of supplying the Administration

with language like this to wield.

I remember that similar language regarding

Iraq was misused by the Administration. We

meant to express concerns and admonish the

Iraqi government, but our words ended up

being used as evidence for military action.

The standard of proof for a House expression

of concern is and should be lower than

the standard of proof for an invasion—but I

don’t think any of us can count on the Bush

Administration to draw that distinction. Therefore,

I must vote ‘‘no.’’