Mr. Speaker, our

Constitution entrusts to Congress

alone the power to declare war, a power

we should invoke with great care on

evidence of a clear and present danger

to our country.

President Bush has asked Congress to

cede that power to him to be wielded

against Iraq at a time of his choosing,

with or without United Nations support,

in a unilateral, preemptive strike

of his own determination of the level of

threat Iraq poses to our national security.

I will not surrender our constitutional

authority. I will not vote for the

committee resolution which confers

upon the President fast-track war making

power. The President should

first win U.N. Security Council approval

of a new, more rigorous round of

arms inspections in Iraq.

If Iraq resists the international inspectors

and the mandated inspections

fail, the President should then obtain a

Security Council authorization of

force, as was done in 1990, following

which he should ask Congress for approval

to wage war against Iraq. The

resolution offered by the gentlewoman

from California respects the Constitution

and the American people and will

give renewed diplomacy a chance.

The Committee Resolution grants the President

a new foreign policy and national security

tool that charts us on a fundamental departure

from historic U.S. foreign policy toward a dangerous

precedent of first strike military authority

for future Presidents. Once established, this

resolution has enormous global consequences

and will set the standard for other nations to

attack preemptively, without restraint.

This policy is contrary to our entire national

tradition. The United States did not pursue a

policy of first strike military authority against

the Soviet Union during the Cold War when

the Soviets had nuclear weapons directed at

U.S. cities and military targets. Nor did the

United States strike first against Iraq in 1990–

1991.

For most U.S. citizens, the real threat to the

nation is our deteriorating domestic security:

unemployment, the loss of retirement income,

access to affordable prescription drugs, and

corporate misfeasance and malfeasance that

are eroding workers’ retirement and health

care security.

Our domestic economy is in serious decline.

Congress and the President should, as our top

priority, mobilize investments in infrastructure

and job training to put the unemployed back to

work. We have to mount new strategies to

counter unfairly-traded imports that undermine

our national security through loss of jobs and

income.

Earlier this year, the President made important

recommendations in this Section 201

Steel Remedy plan. Since then, however, he

has backtracked, granting numerous exemptions

to allow significant subsidized steel imports

to pour into our nation undermining our

domestic steel and iron ore industries. These

are essential national security issues.

Our national security begins with domestic

security, expressed in a living wage, job security,

livable communities, investments in education,

health care, and transportation that will

ensure a better future for our nation.

The Administration’s obsession with Iraq

has deflected our national energies from the

need to shore up domestic security. We must

not allow the pursuit of terrorists at home and

abroad, nor vigilance over the threat from Iraq

divert our attention from critically urgent domestic

priorities.