Mr. Speaker, I

stand in strong support today of the Lee substitute,

which I urge my colleagues to vote in

favor of. I wholeheartedly support the principles

of this substitute, and believe they contain

a much more humane answer to the

grave issue of Iraq.

Like Congresswoman BARBARA LEE I urge

the United States to re-engage in the diplomatic

process of diplomacy. I also would like

to urge our country to remain committed to the

UN inspector process. I am also in complete

agreement with the Lee substitute’s premise

that there will likely be horrific consequences

of our actions if the United States delivers a

first strike against Iraq, particularly without the

support of the United Nations.

Like Congresswoman LEE and many of my

colleagues in the Congressional Black Caucus,

I stand in strong opposition to a unilateral

first strike by the U.S. without a clearly demonstrated

and imminent threat of attack on the

United States. I would also like to emphasize

that I categorically believe that we must not

declare war until every diplomatic option is

completely exhausted. The Bush Resolution

authorizes the potential use of force immediately,

long before diplomatic options have

been exhausted or even fully explored. Furthermore,

a unilateral first-strike would undermine

the moral authority of the United States,

result in substantial loss of life, destabilize the

Mideast region and undermine the ability of

our nation to address unmet domestic priorities.

The President is asking Congress to give

him a blank check. And I say today Mr. President,

that your account, has come back overdrawn.

This blank check gives him too much

power. A blank check that forces Congress to

waive its constitutional duty to declare war. A

blank check that lets the President declare

war, and not consult Congress until 48 hours

after the attack has begun.

Not only has the President economically

taken us to deficit, but there is deficit in his arguments.

Why Iraq, and why today??

You know, in my 10 years of serving in

Congress, this is the most serious vote I’ve

taken. And I have to say, the Resolution on

Iraq the White House drafted is intentionally

misleading. It misleads the American public,

the international community, and yes, even the

United States Congress.

This is a sad day. Almost as sad as it was

627 days ago when the Supreme Court selected

George W. Bush as the President. You

know, the White House talks about dictators,

but we haven’t done anything to correct what

has happened right here in the United States.

It amazes me that we question other governments,

when in our own country, we did not

have a fair election.

I recently traveled to Russia, China, and

South Korea, and believe it would be most unfortunate

to damage the good will our nation

was receiving after September 11th because

of the Bush Administration’s reckless actions.

We are on our own; NO ONE in the international

community is behind us.

I have not seen any new information demonstrating

that Iraq poses a threat to our country

any more now than it did ten years ago,

and certainly am without reason to believe we

should attack unilaterally, without the support

of the U.N.

In fact, recent poll numbers released suggest

that many Americans do not support the

way the President is handling the situation

with Iraq either. Indeed, polls indicates what I

imagined all along; namely, that a majority of

Americans believe President Bush and Congress

are spending too much time discussing

Iraq, while neglecting domestic problems like

health care and education. Many also said

that they did not want the United States to act

without support from allies and by a two to

one margin, did not want the U.S. to act before

U.N. weapons inspectors had an opportunity

to enter Iraq and conduct further investigations.

Although the Administration is attempting to

convince the American public otherwise, they

have shown me little evidence of a connection

between Iraq and 9–11. And little evidence

that Iraq poses an immediate threat to our

country.

Iraq’s government is not democratic, but

neither are many other countries listed on the

State Department’s terrorist list: like Iran,

Syria, Libya, North Korea, Cuba, and Sudan.

I reiterate my opposition to this Resolution,

and to this war.

To my colleagues, it is in your hands. I do

believe the world has good and evil, and what

you are about to do here today, will tilt it in a

negative direction. It will set us on a course,

and I hope I’m wrong, but it could set us on

a course, that our children’s children, will pay

for. That the entire world will pay for. And that

will put thousands of American soldiers in

harm’s way.

Thank you, and I yield back the balance of

my time.