Mr. Speaker, I rise

in support of the Spratt amendment as

the right way to security; not having

to go it alone, but with the help of our

allies.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a heavy heart.

The decision whether or not to send our

young men and women into war is the most

difficult one a Member of Congress can face.

In considering this matter, I have done considerable

research, been briefed by the White

House, talked with my colleagues and listened

to the voices of the people of Maine.

It is clear that Saddam Hussein is a dangerous

dictator. He has not hesitated to attack

his neighbors, and even his own people. Since

weapons inspectors were forced out of Iraq in

1998, we know that Hussein has taken steps

to rebuild his chemical and biological weapons

production capability. We have strong evidence

that he is beginning to rebuild his nuclear

program. Based on all that we have

seen, in the past and in the present, it is clear

that the Iraqi regime is a threat to international

peace and security.

I am convinced that it is in the best interests

of our Nation and our world that we eliminate

these weapons of mass destruction. If Hussein

does not use them directly, I believe there is

a good chance that he will provide them to

other terrorists who will. This situation cannot

stand.

The question now before us is how to

achieve our common goal of disarming Saddam

Hussein. I am not supportive of a unilateral

pre-emptive strike. As President bush said

on Tuesday night, force must be our last resort,

not our first. I am convinced that we will

be strongest if we address this situation with

the support of a multilateral coalition.

For that reason, I will be supporting Representative

SPRATT’s substitute that calls for

just such a multilateral approach. This resolution

echoes the President’s speech in which

we urged the adoption of a new U.N. resolution

that seeks to disarm Hussein, and if that

resolution proves ineffective, calls for a coalition

to disarm him. This substitute supports

the President’s intention to exhaust diplomatic

approaches to disarming Iraq while still ensuring

that he will be able to take action against

Iraq if these methods prove ineffective.

To me, the most significant difference between

Mr. SPRATT’s approach and that of the

administration is that Mr. SPRATT keeps Congress

closely involved as the decision-making

process moves forward, as is consistent with

our Constitutional duty. Under the substitute,

the administration will be required to return to

Congress when and if it determines that diplomatic

avenues have been pursued and have

failed. At that time, expedited procedures will

be in place to authorize military action if necessary.

When we are dealing with issues of this

magnitude, I believe that there needs to be

true consultation between the Congress and

the administration. Simple notification is not

enough. I agree that we need to speak with

one voice, and this substitute gives us the

tools to do that.

The bottom line is that yes, we must take

action to protect our Nation and, indeed, the

world from the weapons of mass destruction

that Saddam Hussein has developed and continues

to pursue. However, unilateral action is

not, in my opinion, the most effective approach.

I believe a multilateral approach offers

the best chance to effectively disarm Saddam

Hussein and put an end to his chemical and

biological weapons programs. It’s important for

our government to work with other nations,

and ensure that all non-military avenues have

been exhausted, before taking action on our

own. We should work with the world community

and the United Nations Security Council.

If these efforts fail, I support using force in

concert with our allies.

I opposed the President’s original resolution,

and I commend my colleagues who have

worked so hard to improve it. The underlying

resolution has come a long way in addressing

my concerns. However, I still believe that the

Spratt approach is the best one at this time.

It is a workable resolution, which neither ties

the President’s hands nor promotes unilateral

action by the United States. I urge my colleagues

to support this responsible approach.