Mr. Speaker, I rise in

support of this bipartisan resolution. It

provides the best opportunity for a

peaceful resolution by giving the President

the discretion to use force if Iraq

does not permit full and comprehensive

inspections of all sites that could be

used to develop biological, chemical, or

nuclear weapons.

I hope, as do the American people,

that the President will use this discretion

wisely and that Saddam Hussein

will understand that the community of

nations will not permit him to develop

and maintain weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. Speaker, today’s vote is a difficult

one. Many House Members have

worn their country’s uniform in time

of war and have seen the horror of battle

firsthand. We all understand the

sacrifices that we may be asking our

brave young men and women to make

in the months to come.

As chairman of the Democratic Caucus,

I have presided over numerous

meetings on this subject. I have listened

carefully to my colleagues and to

policy experts who have followed Saddam

Hussein’s activities over the

years.

In the end, I have come to the conclusion

that the course set out in this

resolution is the wisest path for our

Nation.

The resolution makes clear that our

first preference is for the President to

work through the United Nations to

obtain multilateral support for a tough

regime of weapons inspections. It requires

the President to report back to

Congress and to consult with us on an

ongoing basis. But in the end, it gives

the President the authority to commit

U.S. troops if all diplomatic efforts

fail.

Mr. Speaker, giving the President

this discretion is highly appropriate. In

so doing, we make clear to Saddam

Hussein that it is in his interests to

permit the inspectors full and unfettered

access now. Should he fail to do

so, he will face the full might of the

United States military, the strongest

and finest fighting force in the world

today.

Mr. Speaker, no one wants war. We

all want peace, and peace is best

achieved from a position of strength.

So I want to personally recognize the

work of our Democratic leader, the

gentleman from Missouri (Mr. GEPHARDT),

in narrowing and improving

the resolution originally offered by the

administration. We vote today on a

better, more focused approach because

of the hours he spent negotiating with

the White House over the final product.

I want to say a word about the role of

the minority in our system of government.

Some suggest that the minority’s

role is to automatically oppose everything

sought by the President. I disagree.

The minority can play a constructive

role by working to improve a

Presidential proposal and, therefore,

helping achieve a national consensus.

That is particularly true in matters of

foreign policy.

So I urge all of my colleagues, regardless

of how my colleagues voted on

the Spratt or Lee substitutes, to join

Democrats and Republicans in voting

for this bipartisan resolution.

Mr. Speaker, this bipartisan resolution

will send a strong, clear signal

that America is committed to ending

the threat that Saddam Hussein poses

to the world through democracy, if he

will allow it, but through military action

if he refuses.