Mr. Speaker, I thank

the gentleman for yielding time to me.

Mr. Speaker, today Congress faces a

momentous decision. We have had a

spirited and vigorous debate about an

issue of the utmost importance to this

institution, to our government, and to

our Nation. In the end, each of us must

decide for our constituents and for ourselves

whether or not to support authorizing

President Bush to use force

against Iraq.

President Bush has called for an end

to the international appeasement of

Saddam Hussein. He has challenged the

world to face up to its responsibilities

and stop this evil man with his evil designs.

Clearly, Mr. Speaker, we would all

prefer that diplomacy could solve this

problem. At the same time, we must

understand that diplomacy has not

worked with Iraq. We have been patient

over this last decade, yet Iraq

continues to defy the world community.

Saddam has had his opportunity.

The United States must now determine

for itself how we should protect our

Nation and our citizens.

It is we, Members of Congress, the

President, and the American people

who should determine the fate of our

Nation. Members of Congress have the

difficult decision of determining

whether or not the Nation should go to

war. As a Member of Congress, I accept

my responsibilities to weigh the evidence

and to vote yea or nay, knowing

full well what the consequences may

be. I take this job seriously, and am

willing to do my part to protect our

Nation and ensure that Americans,

both at home and abroad, are safe.

I have concluded that, to protect the

lives and safety of our country and our

people, we must act. Mr. Speaker, it is

time to give the President the authority

he has requested to deal with the

imminent threat that Saddam Hussein

poses to the United States and to the

world. I hope that diplomacy will work

and that Saddam will finally yield unconditionally

to international inspections

for weapons of mass destruction.

I also hope that the United Nations

will join the United States in this effort.

However, we cannot, as a Nation,

make our national security dependent

upon any other institution, no matter

how well-intentioned it may be. In the

end, the growing coalition of countries

supporting our efforts will see the overwhelming

bipartisan support in the

vote today as a symbol of the unity

and commitment of this Nation to disarming

Saddam Hussein.

In the end, our actions today, Mr.

Speaker, will be seen as the correct

course for our Nation and for our

world.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to

join me in support of this resolution

and in support of our President as we

cast our votes today.