Mr. Speaker, the language

of the resolution has been improved

significantly. I will vote to give

this administration authority, and I

ask that this authority be exercised judiciously

and morally.

Mr. Speaker, the intense debate we are

having is what the American people deserve

on a subject as serious as the matter before

us.

Like most Americans, I believe Saddam

Hussein has chemical and biological weapons

and that he has stepped up his nuclear program.

Left unchecked, these activities are a

serious threat to Iraq’s neighbors and to the

United States.

While this alone may not justify military action,

we are living in a changed world today.

The new challenges we face require a new

way of thinking, and our country’s leaders

must make every effort to anticipate and prevent

future attacks on the people of our country.

I will therefore support the resolution to use

force, if necessary, to disarm Saddam Hussein.

I am concerned that the administration

initially approached the situation in Iraq in a

hasty and simplistic manner. While the administration

is now pursuing a more responsible

course of action that could over time unify the

American people and the world community, I

remain concerned about the timing, ultimate

objectives, international effects, long-term consequences

and human cost of any large-scale

invasion of Iraq.

Nevertheless, the language of the resolution

has been improved significantly since proposed

by the administration and Congress will

have additional opportunities to consult and

work with the President in the future. In supporting

this resolution it is my hope and expectation

that the President will use his authority

in a thoughtful, measured and responsible

way consistent with the moral leadership

America needs to provide the world.

First, the Administration should work in concert

with the global community, including our

allies in the Middle East, to build an international

coalition in support of our goals, as

was successfully shown by the first President

Bush in the Gulf War. Any plan to go it alone

has the potential to inflame global mistrust of

the United States and increase the possibility

of renewed terrorist activity.

Second, our country must get its fiscal

house in order as the war on terrorism continues.

Military action is very costly and common

sense dictates that our allies and other

nations that benefit from ridding the world of

Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction should

also share the financial burden.

Third, it is important to have a clear plan

and commitment on how to ensure stability in

the region after our goals in Iraq are achieved.

Disarming Iraq and removing Saddam Hussein

from power without a concrete plan to ensure

a stable and less hostile new regime would be

a mistake.

Finally, the administration must continue to

engage the American people, Congress, the

United Nations and our international allies to

build support for the disarmament of Iraq. This

course is our best hope for achieving our

goals without war.

Since coming to Congress in 1994, I have

consistently supported an activist role for the

United States in the world community. I have

supported giving the administration, regardless

of political party and despite intense criticism

at times, the necessary military authority and

resources to combat threats to our national

security and to promote human rights and

American values around the globe. I strongly

supported our country’s attacks during the

1990’s on military targets in Iraq, Afghanistan

and the Sudan, and I wholeheartedly supported

our country’s efforts in Bosnia and

Kosovo long before the tragedy of September

11th.

I will vote to give this administration similar

authority and I ask that this authority be exercised

judiciously and morally.