Mr.

Speaker, I believe history tells us that

supporting this resolution and empowering

the President for peace is the surest

chance to removing the threat to

America without conflict and giving

the authority to defend America and

freedom, if necessary.

Mr. Speaker, I would quote Theodore Roosevelt,

from a speech he gave in 1916 while

the rest of the world was engaged in the Great

War,

Mr. Speaker, in the weeks since the Iraq

policy debate came to the forefront of the national

agenda, I have thought long and hard

about how I would vote if it became my responsibility.

This vote is the most important

vote I will cast since I was elected to serve in

Congress.

As Members of this august body, the people’s

house, it is the essence of our constitutional

oath to defend America against all enemies

foreign and domestic.

It is at times like these that I reflect on the

words of a man who inspired me to the cause

of public service, John F. Kennedy: ‘‘I do not

shrink from this responsibility, I welcome it.’’

Mr. Speaker, in framing my thoughts on this

momentous debate, I looked to history as a

guide. I am unable to escape its harsher lessons.

I think of that lone voice in the House of

Commons in the 1930s, who tried to alert his

country to a growing danger. Winston Churchill

warned against making agreements with an

aggressor who had no intention of honoring

them, all in the name of ‘‘peace.’’ Others’ reluctance

to confront a growing evil resulted in

countless deaths and untold suffering.

More recently, Ronald Reagan challenged

America and the rest of the free world to remember

its historical roots and stand up to

Soviet expansionism. With the simple words,

‘‘Evil Empire,’’ he succinctly characterized the

nature of our adversary in the decades-old

standoff between East and West. Man in the

international community believed Ronald Reagan’s

abandonment of de´ tente for his policy of

peace through strength would bring war. Instead,

the Soviet Union collapsed and because

of the bold stand of an American president,

countless millions were liberated without

a shot being fired and the bright light of freedom

was able to shine anew.

The age-old struggle of freedom against tyranny

has entered a new century. Yet when

faced with the choice of negotiating with an

aggressor in the name of peace, or confronting

aggression before it is too late, history’s

lesson is clear.

Mr. Speaker, it has been our tradition to

fight for freedom and prosperity, going back to

our Republic’s infancy and America’s lonely

fight against the Barbary Pirates on the shores

of Tripoli.

It is this chapter of our history that brought

to mind the undesirable possibility that America

would again have to confront evil on its

own.

I am relieved that this is not the case in our

struggle with Iraq with friends and allies like

Britain, Italy, Spain, Norway, Denmark, Australia,

and Qatar publicly stating their support

for our efforts to rid the world of this great

danger.

Yet, as we now ask the United Nations to

act in the name of its own relevancy, Mr.

Speaker, I think we should ask ourselves,

should America’s ability to defend her citizens

be held hostage to countries that have more

to lose, because of strong commercial ties,

and less to gain from the liberation of Iraq?

We should ask ourselves, would Paris or

Moscow or Beijing be in Saddam Hussein’s

crosshairs or would it be New York or Washington?

I have thought seriously about the concerns

that dealing with Iraq would prove to be a distraction

from the War on Terror.

But it’s integral to the war on terror to remove

one of the foremost sponsors of terrorist

activity in the world. It is well known that this

is a man who subsidizes suicide bombers,

providing support to those who stand in the

way of progress toward Mideast peace.

The War on Terror’s central tenet is, if you

stand with the terrorists, you will be treated as

one.

Many are rightfully concerned about a long-term

American commitment in Iraq. But, Mr.

Speaker, we are already committed to the region

and to Iraq. We have stationed a large

military force in the region for more than a

decade. We have maintained a military force

throughout the Gulf region to keep the peace

and enforce no-fly zones. We can and must

nurture an open and democratic Iraq.

Some of those whose voices are loudest in

protest of an American-led liberation of Iraq

may themselves fear it will undermine their

own authoritarian regimes. Is the real fear of

Iran’s mullahs instability or a free Iraq next

door?

What excuses will be left to the leaders of

a failed Palestinian state once the Saddam regime

joins the tyrannies of the 20th century on

the ash heap of history?

I have an 18-year-old son I took to college

a little over a month ago. It never leaves my

thoughts what a war means in human terms.

but no member of this body should forget the

consequences of inaction.

As Theodore Roosevelt said, ‘‘Wars are, of

course, as a rule to be avoided; but they are

far better than certain kinds of peace.’’

For all these reasons, I will pray for peace.

But at the same time, Mr. Speaker, I will vote

to give President Bush the authority to needs

to defend America, to defend freedom, and

keep our people safe. I pray that by following

history’s guide, we will again find peace and

freedom without using force.