Mr. Speaker, I thank the

chairman for yielding me the time, and

I commend the chairman and the ranking

member for the work that they

have done, not just on this but the

whole issue of the war on terror.

Mr. Speaker, Americans have always

had to summon courage to disregard

the timid counsel of those who would

mortgage our security to the false

promises of wishful thinking and appeasement.

The perils of complacency

were driven home to us in September of

last year. We saw in tragic detail that

evil is far more than some abstract

concept. No longer should America

allow dangers to gather and multiply.

No longer should we stand idle as terrorists

and terrorist states plot to murder

our citizens.

As a free society, we have to defeat

dangers before they ripen. The war on

terrorism will be fought here at home,

unless we summon the will to confront

evil before it attacks.

President Bush certainly understands

this imperative for action. The President

is demonstrating the strong,

moral leadership to find and defeat

threats to the United States before

they strike. Because once a madman

like Saddam Hussein is able to deliver

his arsenal, whether it is chemical, biological

or nuclear weapons, there is no

telling when an American city will be

attacked at his direction or with his

support.

A nuclear armed Iraq would soon become

the world’s largest safe haven

and refuge for the world’s terrorist organizations.

Waiting to act until after

Saddam has nuclear weapons will leave

free nations with an awful dilemma.

Will they, on the one hand, risk nuclear

annihilation by confronting terrorists

in Iraq or will they give in to

fear by failing to confront these terrorist

groups?

For that reason, regime change in

Iraq is a central goal of the war on terror.

It is vital because a war on terrorism

that leaves the world’s leading

purveyor and practitioner of terror in

power would be a bald failure.

Some call Hussein a diversion, but

far from being a diversion, confronting

Saddam Hussein is a defining measure

of whether we still wage the war on

terror fully and effectively. It is the

difference between aggressive action

and misguided passivity.

The question we face today is not

whether to go to war, for war was

thrust upon us. Our only choice is between

victory or defeat.

And let us just be clear about it. In

the war on terror, victory cannot be secured

at a bargaining table.

Iraq’s vile dictator is a central power

of the axis of evil. President Bush and

this Congress are committed to removing

the threat from Saddam Hussein’s

terrorist state. Only regime change in

Iraq can accomplish that objective.

Only regime change can remove the

danger from Saddam’s weapons of mass

destruction. Only by taking them out

of his hands and destroying them can

we be certain that terror weapons will

not wind up in the hands of the terrorists.

Saddam Hussein is seeking the means

to murder millions in just a single moment.

He is trying to spread that grip

of fear beyond his own borders, and he

is consumed with hatred for America.

But I am not here today to offer that

definitive indictment of Iraq’s tyrant.

That has already been very clearly documented

and well-established in this

debate.

In the wicked litany of crimes

against humanity, Saddam Hussein has

composed a scarlet chapter of terror.

Our only responsible option is to confront

this threat before Americans die.

Time works to the advantage of our enemies,

not ours.

Under our Constitution, America

speaks through the United States Constitution;

and our resolution is very,

very clear. The enemies of a free and a

moral people will find no safe harbor in

this world.

Today, the free world chooses

strength over temporizing and timidity.

Terrorists and tyrants will see that

the fruits of their evil will be certain

destruction by the forces of democracy.

Now we seek broad support, but I am

telling my colleagues that fighting this

war on terrorism by committee or consensus

is a certain prescription for defeat.

We will defend our country by defeating

terrorists wherever they may

flee around the world.

None of us take the gravity of this

vote and its ramifications lightly, but

history informs us that the dangers of

complacency and inaction far outweigh

the calculated risks of confronting

evil.

In the fullness of time, America will

be proud that in our hour of testing we

chose the bold path of action, not the

hollow comfort of appeasement.

So let us just take this stand today

against tyranny. Let us take this stand

against terror. Let us take this stand

against fear. Let us stand with the

President of the United States.

I say to my colleagues, just trust the

cherished principles on which we were

founded. Put faith in freedom and raise

our voices and send this message to the

world: The forces of freedom are on the

march and terrorists will find no safe

harbor in this world.