Mr. Speaker, like

my colleagues of both parties and in both

chambers, the national debate on whether or

not to go to war with Iraq, and under what circumstances,

has weighed heavily on my mind

and heart.

For, clearly, sending the young men and

women of our armed forces into harm’s way is

one of the most serious and far reaching decisions

a member of Congress will ever have to

make.

Like all Americans, I take pride in the fact

that we are a peaceful nation, but one that will

defend itself if needed against real and imminent

dangers.

Like all Americans, I take very seriously our

responsibility as the world’s global superpower,

and realize how our words and actions

can have huge repercussions throughout the

world.

For that reason, I attended briefings and

studied the materials provided us. I have listened

to the administration, my constituents,

my colleagues on both sides of the issue, both

sides of the aisle, and both sides of this Congress,

and I remain deeply concerned about

our march to war without a supportive coalition,

nor a clear and moral justification.

Before making a final decision on how to

cast my vote, I also asked myself, as a mother,

what would I want our nation’s leaders to

do before sending my son, my daughter or

any loved one to war.

While I support our President’s efforts to

keep our nation and the world safe, I firmly

believe that the President has not made the

case for granting him the far-reaching power

to declare preemptive and unilateral war

against Iraq.

There is no question that Sadam Hussein is

a dangerous and unconscionable dictator with

little regard for human life. And, there is no

question that he must be disarmed and removed

from power.

The facts presented thus far however, do

not support the premise that Sadam is an immediate

danger to our country. For that reason,

I believe it is in the best interest of our

nation and our American troops to make every

possible effort to prevent war by exhausting

diplomatic efforts, by giving United Nations

weapons inspectors the resources and opportunity

to perform their work, and by establishing

a United Nations Security Council multilateral

coalition to use force if necessary.

If this fails, the President can then bring his

case to Congress on the need to initiate a unilateral

pre-emptive strike against Iraq because

a blank check authorization for military force at

this time is unacceptable. I cannot in good

conscience support the administration’s request

for near ‘carte blanche’ authority to

wage war when the case to do so has not

been justified.

I will, however, support the resolutions of

my colleagues Representative BARBARA LEE

and Representative JOHN SPRATT. The Lee

resolution urges congress to work with the

United Nations using all peaceful means possible

to resolve the issue of Iraqi weapons of

mass destruction. The Spratt resolution includes

similar requirements with regard to the

United Nations, but also authorizes the use of

force if the United Nations efforts fail.

The Spratt resolution brings responsibility

and accountability to our effort to protect our

country against Sadam Hussein, and makes

the Administration and the Congress joint partners

in any military action against Iraq. The

Spratt proposal honors our nation’s fundamental

system of checks and balances.

And, makes it possible for me to say to my

constituents, and our sons and daughters: ‘‘I

did everything in my power to keep you from

harm’s way.’’