Mr. Speaker, today I rise in

support of the bipartisan resolution to authorize

the use of military force against Iraq.

When President Bush addressed the nation

following the terrorist attacks of September

11th, he made it entirely clear that the United

States would not tolerate nations that harbor

terrorists. Like the President, I believe a nation

that provides a safe-haven for the likes of al-

Qaeda is no different than the terrorist themselves.

We know Saddam Hussein harbors

terrorists in Iraq, funds terrorist training camps,

and supports the families of suicide bombers.

He possesses and continues to develop biological

and chemical weapons and seeks to

build a nuclear bomb. We know he will try to

use this bomb against the United States or our

allies if he gets his hands on one. He already

has unleashed biological and chemical weapons

upon his own people, killing thousands.

What more do we need to know? We must

stand ready to take action before it is too late.

I want to make clear to every American, especially

the folks in my home state of Louisiana,

that this decision to possibly send our

young service men and women into harms

way is not about settling unfinished business.

Nor is it about oil or taking control of Iraqi oil

fields. This is about a grave and present threat

against our people, today.

Saddam Hussein is a tyrannical dictator who

hates America and who will use any means

possible to attack us if given the opportunity.

We cannot allow Saddam that opportunity.

Our only option is to take every precaution to

ensure the safety of our citizens.

Whether the next direct threat against the

United States comes in the form of retaliation

from Iraq or from any other terrorist entity, we

must be prepared for the possibility of a biological

or chemical attack against Americans,

here or abroad. Today, I can say with confidence

that America’s public health emergency

system is better prepared to respond to

such an attack as a result of the comprehensive

bioterrorism preparedness bill that I

worked hard to help write and enact.

This sweeping legislation, signed into law by

the President in June, dramatically improves

our nation’s ability to respond swiftly and effectively

to new and emerging terrorist threats.

This major milestone covers everything from

public health preparedness and improvements,

to enhancing controls on deadly biological

agents, to protecting our food, drug, and drinking

water supplies and improving communications

between all levels of government, public

health officials, first responders and health

providers.

Mr. Speaker, this threat to our national security

is one we can conquer. We have the

means, and I believe as the President does

that ‘‘we must act now before waiting for final

proof—the smoking gun—that could come in

the form of a mushroom cloud.’’