Mr. Speaker, I rise today in

support of the Hastert-Gephardt Iraq resolution,

in opposition to the Spratt and Lee

amendments, and in strong support of our

President.

I do not take this action lightly. No one enjoys

the idea of placing sons and daughters of

America in harm’s way. Twelve years ago,

while serving as an Air Force C–130 navigator,

I was one of those troops on the receiving

end of a resolution like this one. I know it

was an agonizing decision for many members

of Congress. I know many members are struggling

with this resolution here today. And I

have received phone calls, letters, and emails

from many concerned Tennesseans on both

sides of this issue.

To all of them, I would offer the advice Margaret

Thatcher gave President George H.W.

Bush in 1990: ‘‘Now is no time to get wobbly.’’

The resolution Congress passed before Desert

Storm was right, both for America and for the

world. This one is too.

The Spratt amendment and the Lee amendment

would each tie the President’s hands,

subjecting U.S. foreign policy to the dictates of

the U.N. Security Council. United Nations opposition

to removing the corrupt Iraqi regime in

1991 is a major reason why we’re here today.

I am not comfortable with China, Russia, and

France having a veto on American security

decisions. America is a peaceful nation, but

when our freedom and security have been

challenged in the past, we have consistently

done whatever it took to protect our way of

life. We are challenged again today, and

America must take the lead against this tyranny.

I take issue with those who call any action

in Iraq ‘‘a preemptive strike’’. It is surely not.

For Saddam, the gulf war has never ended. In

the past two years, forces at his command

have fired over 1,600 times at American and

British planes patrolling the no-fly zone Saddam

agreed to at the end of the gulf war.

They’ve fired at our pilots more than 60 times

since September 18th, the day Saddam promised

to ‘‘allow the return of United Nations inspectors

without conditions.’’

By using chemical weapons to kill thousands

of his own people, Saddam has proven

his ruthlessness. In invading Iran and Kuwait,

he has shown his inclination toward aggression

and his ambition for dominating the region.

In violating 16 United Nations resolutions,

he has consistently lied to the world and

refused to allow the Iraqi people to join the

ranks of civilized nations.

Now, financed by his immense oil wealth,

Saddam has relentlessly pursued building nuclear,

chemical and biological weapons. These

weapons in the hands of a ruthless tyrant like

Saddam Hussein present a direct threat we

cannot ignore. He could launch an attack on

Israel that plunges many nations into war. He

could also use them as blackmail as he pursues

domination of the Middle East. But his

main threat to America is as a supplier.

Intelligence reports have indicated that

Saddam’s people have been in contact with

al-Qaeda operatives. We know they share a

common interest in harming America and the

West. If Saddam provides al-Qaeda with the

weapons of mass destruction they desire but

cannot make themselves, they will find a way

to transport those weapons into this country.

And the magnitude of the subsequent attack

and its casualties would rival or exceed anything

we experienced on September 11th, December

7th, or any other tragic date in our history.

Remember President Bush’s words from his

State of the Union speech earlier this year.

President Bush and his national security

team may find a way short of war that may

force Saddam to disarm. An overwhelming

vote for this resolution could actually help the

President avoid war while protecting our citizens,

by making it clear to Saddam that we

are united and complete disarmament is his

only way out. During his speech in Cincinnati

this past Monday, President Bush made clear

that war is not his first option, but his last. But

given Saddam’s history, that last option may

be the only way to avoid the greater danger of

nuclear, biological or chemical weapons falling

into the hands of those who will use them

against America.

The situation we face is not all that unlike

the situation Europe faced with the rise of another

previously defeated enemy, Germany.

Winston Churchill’s pleas throughout the

1930’s that Europe deal with Hitler early fell

on deaf ears. Western Europe’s negligence

was followed by fear, appeasement, and eventually,

the most destructive war in history.

This President is determined not to allow

history to repeat itself. The American people

now face a clear choice—whether to put our

head in the sand—or draw a line in it. We will

choose action over fear. The President is

right—in this battle, time in not on our side.

But freedom is. And in the end, victory will be

as well. I strongly support this resolution, and

I will encourage all Americans to do the same.

My God bless our country, our President, and

our men and women in uniform at this critical

time.