Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express

my support for House Joint Resolution

114, authorizing the use of United States

Armed Forces against Iraq. After careful consideration

of the information provided by the

President it is clear that the threat posed by

the current Iraqi regime can no longer be tolerated.

Thousands of my constituents have contacted

me about this resolution, and many

have expressed the earnest hope that war can

be avoided. I share that hope, and urge our

President to use every means short of war to

persuade Iraq to end their violations of Security

Council resolutions, to stop developing

weapons of mass destruction, and to allow

their people to live in peace and freedom. Unfortunately,

the current regime has shown no

willingness to do any of these things.

The Iraqi regime, controlled by Saddam

Hussein and his family, is unique in its level of

violence, both against its own people and its

neighbors. Since Mr. Hussein came to power

he has invaded both Iran and Kuwait. He has

fired ballistic missiles against Saudi Arabia,

Bahrain, and Israel. He has sponsored terrorist

attacks against American citizens and

Iraqi dissidents abroad.

The Hussein regime is also unique in its unquenched

thirst for weapons of mass destruction.

Iraq has used chemical weapons against

its own people and Iran. It has developed biological

weapons. Most disturbingly, Iraq seeks

to acquire nuclear weapons.

Some have said that the Iraqi weapons

problem can be solved by inspections, but Iraq

consistently hindered international inspections

when they allowed them, and since 1998 has

not permitted them at all. Meanwhile they go

ahead with their research program funded by

illegal oil smuggling.

An Iraq armed with nuclear armed ballistic

missiles would not only be the dominant military

power of the Middle East, but it would be

the natural ally of all states and groups that

oppose the United States. We cannot allow

unbridled power into the hands of such an unscrupulous

regime. America’s future cannot be

made dependent on a regime armed with the

ultimate weapon.

The Iraqi regime led by Saddam Hussein is

based on the ruthless use of force, and only

responds to the use of force by those it threatens.

If force must be used to resolve this crisis,

we must ask ourselves: Should we use it

now to defend peace and freedom, or later to

avenge the murder of innocent men, women,

and children by Saddam Hussein’s weapons

of mass destruction. I believe that the answer

to this question is clear and that our President

is correct. I urge my colleagues to join me in

voting for House Joint Resolution 114.

I am grateful for those allies such as the

United Kingdom, the Czech Republic, and others

who are standing with us, and remain

hopeful that other nations will join our cause.

I ask our President to seek the support of as

many nations and international organizations

as possible, and to make available whatever

additional intelligence or security they need. I

also must reiterate that our quarrel is with the

Iraqi regime, not its people. As we move forward

I urge my fellow Americans to remain tolerant

of their neighbors and to avoid any action

based on the ethnicity or religious persuasion

of others. I also urge all Americans, and

all sides in this debate, to support our troops

who may be called upon to enforce this resolution

and defend their country.