Mr. Speaker, many years

from now, when those so inclined decide to

examine the Congress of this era, I am confident

that they will find ours to be a thoughtful,

involved House, one that judiciously examined

every issue essential to the defense and

freedom of our Nation and her allies.

For 3 days, members marched to the floor

to offer their support for, or opposition to, this

bipartisan resolution. Indeed, the true essence

of democracy has been displayed on the floor

of the House of Representatives. I am proud

to have been a part of the dialogue concerning

this important issue of our time.

And it was with much deliberation, consultation,

and discussion that I came to support the

resolution authorizing the use of military force

against Iraq if that force becomes necessary

and if all other means of eliminating this threat

fail.

Let me be clear. This is not a declaration of

war from the Congress. This was Congress

ensuring that the President has the authority

he needs to deal with the very real threat of

Iraq.

Saddam Hussein is a tyrant and a threat.

He is the epitome of malevolence. Indeed, the

record of this murderous regime has been outlined

forcefully in this body, and by our Commander

in Chief.

Saddam has used weapons of mass destruction

against his own people. He waged

war with Iran; he invaded Kuwait. For the last

11 years he has defied the will of the entire

planet as expressed in resolutions by the

United Nations Security Council.

I know of no thinking person who argues

against the profound necessity of eliminating

Saddam’s weapons technology. We all agree

on the menace he poses and desire a world

where he is not a factor.

Saddam Hussein’s repeated defiance when

it comes to permitting weapons inspections is

a strong indication that his regime poses a

very real threat to the civilized world right now.

Ultimately, I believe that Saddam Hussein is

dangerous. Dangerous in his country, dangerous

to his region, and dangerous to the

United States. Therefore I feel that giving the

President the authority to use force against

Iraq is an important matter of international-national

security. Iraq poses an immediate biological

and chemical threat to 50,000 American

troops in the Middle East. This exacerbates

the already enormous instability in the

region.

However, I do not give the President this

authority without reservation. To be sure, in

my view, there are still important lingering

questions that demand further discussion from

the President and this Administration.

For example, should military force be required,

when what? After the intervention, how

will the situation likely evolve?

Why have more nations thus far chosen not

to join us in this coalition against the threat of

Saddam? How will we share the costs of war

with those allies who have joined with us?

If Iraq is truly part of our war on terror, what

about those other nations that seem to fit this

criteria of harboring terrorists and possessing

weapons of mass destruction? Will we address

those threats next, and if so, how? The

President must be prepared to answer this

question of why Iraq and not others.

Further, we must make absolutely certain

that whatever is done in Iraq does not negatively

impact the broader war that we authorized

12 months ago—the war on terrorism. Al

Queada has already taken thousands of our

sons and daughters, fathers and mothers. We

cannot waver one bit in our pursuit of those

who attacked this nation on September 11,

2001.

An we must continually emphasize that our

nation must work with its allies. It is critical

that we try to attain as much international support

as possible. Working together with other

nations on this front will expedite the intervention

process and enhance the chances for

post-war success.

It is this last point that I find absolutely critical.

That is why I was a cosponsor of the

Spratt substitute resolution. It mandated the

administration to fully work through the possibility

of securing a new resolution from the

United Nations Security Council calling for the

disarmament of Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction

before any pursuit of unilateral action.

Although I am disappointed that the mandate

of the Spratt substitute did not pass, I am

confident that as long as Congress exercises

thorough oversight, then the president will proceed

judiciously.

The resolution that passed the House today

was negotiated with the Democratic leadership.

This was a bipartisan compromise, incorporating

may provisions that were left out of

the President’s initial draft proposal. President

Bush has shown good faith thus far in his

dealings with our party. It is time to unite behind

our commander-in-chief.

Nobody wants this conflict to end up in war.

Nobody fails to comprehend the gravity of this

decision. Nobody wants one American soldier

to be in harm’s way.

In fact, we all hope that through the use of

other means, including exhausting our diplomatic

options, Iraq can be disarmed such that

the world community determines that force is

not necessary.

But shall that avenue fail, our nation must

be prepared to protect its citizens fully and

completely from those who wish us harm.

Indeed, it is imperative that the United

States speaks with one voice to Saddam Hussein.

There can be no ambiguity in our resolve

to protect and defend this nation, and the

House accomplished this today.