Mr. speaker, since coming to

Washington, I have taken part in many significant

and historical debates. Most of the time,

Republicans and Democrats have been at

odds with one another. But last week, as I and

a group of my Democrat and Republican colleagues,

discussed this issue with the President

of the United States in the Cabinet Room

of the White House, I felt a sense of purpose

and bipartisanship that made me proud to

serve as a Member of Congress.

To grant our President the authority to use

force against the regime of Saddam Hussein

as a last resort is not a vote I take lightly.

However, over the course of our nation’s

young history, there have been many times

when I wish we had been able to prevent a

variety of calamities. From the assault on

Pearl Harbor to the terrorist attacks of 9–11,

we have been reminded time and time again

that we do not live in splendid isolation.

It is for this reason we must consider taking

up arms yet again to defend ourselves. While

I realize the human cost of war on both sides

is sobering, the cost of inaction in this case

could far exceed our worst fears.

Saddam Hussein has used weapons of

mass destruction on his own people. He has

used them against the Iranians. There is no

question in my mind that this international outlaw

has a diabolical drive to acquire nuclear

weapons to use against our Nation and our allies.

If we do not act now, we will have put the

lives of our citizens at risk and we will have

failed our future generations. We will go down

in history as having given up our principals out

of fear. History will not forgive us.

Our World War II generation of men and

women, under the leadership and strength of

FDR and Churchill, fought and died to give us

the freedoms we enjoy today. It is now up to

us to rise to this new threat. While I believe

we must work with our allies to exhaust all

reasonable diplomatic means, we must also

be prepared to take military action to defend

our country from a tyrant who can unleash a

reign of terror upon the civilized world never

before seen.

Mr. Speaker, it was quite significant for so

many of us with such varied backgrounds and

philosophies to come together with the President

in the Cabinet Room last week. We were

able to prove that national security is an issue

that transcends party lines and sends a signal

to our aggressors that we will stand firm and

united in order to protect our country and her

citizens.

The world is watching us. The United States

and this Congress cannot be afraid to lead

and defend. We have a sacred obligation to

our people and our way of life.