Mr. Speaker, I thank

the distinguished chairman of the Permanent

Select Committee on Intelligence

not only for yielding to me but

for the extraordinary work he does for

this country on a day-in-and-day-out

basis in a very difficult circumstance

right now.

The vote on the resolution to authorize

the use of force to disarm Saddam

Hussein is one of the most important

decisions we will ever have to make as

Members of the House of Representatives.

Every Member of Congress wants

to do what is right, not only for America

but for the entire world.

Today I speak both as the Representative

of the people of Delaware and as

a member of the Permanent Select

Committee on Intelligence. Like many,

I have been traveling throughout my

State over the past few weeks, and Iraq

is on everyone’s minds. Individuals

have crossed the street to give me their

opinions, and seniors have approached

me at our annual beach day event.

I have received many personal letters,

e-mails, and phone calls from people

who have taken the time to sit

down and really think about this very

difficult issue. They know Saddam

Hussein is a tyrannical dictator and

would like to see him go. They hope

war can be avoided but also want to

support the President.

They want to know if immediate

military action is necessary and if the

risks to our young men and women in

uniform are necessary; how will other

nations respond if the United States

decides to enter the conflict without

United Nations’ support; what could be

the effect on the stability of the Middle

East and the fate of the Iraqi people.

I share many of their concerns. That

is why I have tried to gather as much

information as possible by reading reports,

attending briefings, and talking

with other Members of Congress. Here

is what I have learned: the security of

our Nation is at risk.

For the past several months, I have

participated in intelligence hearings on

the September 11 terrorist attacks and

have studied the hatred some nations

and groups have toward America. Saddam

Hussein is encouraging and promoting

this hatred by openly praising

the attacks on the United States. The

Director of Central Intelligence recently

published an unclassified summary

of the evidence against Saddam

Hussein, and it is substantial.

We know that Iraq has continued

building weapons of mass destruction,

energized its missile program, and is

investing in biological weapons. Saddam

Hussein is determined to get

weapons-grade material to develop nuclear

weapons. Its biological weapons

program is larger and more advanced

than before the Gulf War. Iraq also is

attempting to build unmanned vehicles,

UAVs, to possibly deliver biological

warfare agents. All of this has been

done in flagrant violation of the U.N.

Security Council resolutions.

Some may react to this evidence by

saying that, in the past, other countries

have had similar arsenals and the

United States did not get involved. But

as President Bush has told us and as

Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld reiterated

yesterday in a meeting, Saddam

Hussein’s Iraq is different. This is a

ruthless dictator whose record is despicable.

He has waged war against his

neighbors and on his own people. He

has brutalized and tortured his own

citizens, harbored terrorist networks,

engaged in terrorist acts, lied, cheated,

and defied the will of the international

community.

Mr. Speaker, I have examined this information

and some of the more specific

classified reports. The bottom line

is, we do not want to get caught off

guard. We must take all precautions to

avoid a catastrophic event similar to

September 11.

In recent meetings, the National Security

Adviser, Dr. Condoleezza Rice,

rightly called this coercive diplomacy.

It is my hope that through forceful diplomacy,

backed by clear resolve, we

can avoid war. Unfortunately, Saddam

Hussein’s history of deception makes a

new attempt to disarm him difficult.

Additionally, our goal to disarm him

must also be connected to a plan to end

his regime, should he refuse to disarm.

For all these reasons, I would encourage

all of us to support this resolution

as the best resolution to make this

happen.