Mr. Speaker, the responsibility for

authorizing the use of America’s military

weighs heavily on all of us today,

and I have no doubt that we each rise

knowing that the Constitution and the

Nation now call on each of us and no

one else.

Nearly all assembled today, including

myself, voted to authorize force and

empower our war on terrorism. Our response

was immediate and unified. The

Taliban government had to fall. Al

Qaeda had to be confronted in Afghanistan

and all across the globe, and we

carried into battle the full moral authority

of a world stirred to action.

I oppose the resolution today reluctantly

because I fully anticipate that

we will need to act against Iraq before

very long. I have no illusions about

Saddam Hussein. Saddam Hussein and

his regime threaten the safety of our

country and his neighbors, many of

whom are our allies. He has invaded

and occupied neighboring countries and

launched deadly missiles at civilian

populations. This is a regime that has

used and intends to use chemical and

biological weapons and has done its

best to develop a nuclear weapons program.

This is a murderous regime that has

slaughtered its own people. Saddam

Hussein is a war criminal who should

be on trial, along with Slobodan

Milosevic in The Hague.

I rise in opposition reluctantly but

no less certain of the importance of a

no vote. Because of the nature of this

regime and because of the war on terrorism,

we must marshal the moral authority

and strategic resources that

can end this grave threat and secure

America’s long-term interests. This

resolution does not meet that historic

requirement, in my view.

While it is an improvement over the

original proposal, it represents a nod to

the U.N., our allies and our long-term

interests but requires almost nothing

before America goes to war. It does not

require that we seek to operate under a

U.N. resolution or to seek unfettered

U.N. inspection or to build broad support

from allies before America goes to

war. In doing so, we weaken our moral

authority, our military effectiveness

and our ability to keep events under

control afterwards.

And if we go it alone against Iraq, as

this resolution permits, I am concerned

that our efforts will lack the legitimacy

that an operation of this magnitude

requires. I am concerned that

the United States will have to carry

the full burden of renewal and policing

Iraq, which will surely be high.

Without U.N. sanction, I believe this

action could increase instability in the

region and indeed throughout the

world. It could very well undermine the

war on terrorism, alienating countries

the United States will need to achieve

the broader objective of uncovering and

dismantling al Qaeda cells across the

world.

I support the Spratt substitute because

I believe it fully accepts the goal

of eliminating weapons of mass destruction

from Iraq. It accounts for

Saddam Hussein’s record of deceit, of

lying to the world and forestalling the

inspection process by anticipating the

use of force, but the Spratt substitute

rightly considers force something that

is multiplied in effectiveness when the

right stage is set.

It requires the President to certify

that the U.N. Security Council has not

acted or acted insufficiently to achieve

Iraqi disarmament. The substitute requires

that he certify that unilateral

force is the only option, that military

force is necessary to make Iraq comply

and that the United States is forming

as broad-based a coalition as possible.

Having taken every possible diplomatic

action, it requires the President

to certify that military action in Iraq

will not interfere with the broader war

on terrorism.

The Spratt substitute takes the responsible

course of action, exhausting

diplomatic efforts and building an

international coalition first, while acknowledging

that military action may

be inevitable. I believe this path both

ensures that we will be able to continue

our success in the war on terrorism

in the long term without compromising

our safety in the short term.

Mr. Speaker, the President has asked

that we pass the resolution to send the

message to the U.N. I hope we pass the

Spratt substitute so that we can send a

message that our war on terrorism will

not be compromised, and I hope that a

no vote will urge the President to act

with the force of nations to achieve our

noble and our essential goals.