Mr. Speaker, tomorrow, we will all have to cast one of the most

difficult votes of our careers. I know

this will be the most difficult vote I

will have to cast in the 8 years that I

have had the privilege of representing

the people of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

It is a vote that I have given much

thought to because, Mr. Speaker, we

are talking about the possibility of

sending America’s sons and daughters

to war; and that is something that we

must never take lightly.

Now, all of us here in the Congress

have been to many briefings. I have

talked to the Director of the CIA, the

DIA, the National Security Adviser. We

have heard from many people from the

administration, all of us, I believe, in

an effort to get the facts, to seek the

truth, to help us make a decision that

we think is in the best interest of our country.

And I want to say at the beginning

that I think we are going to reach different

conclusions tomorrow. There are

basically three different ways we can

vote tomorrow, and I do not question

anyone’s vote tomorrow. I think everyone

in the House is a patriot and will

vote in a manner which they think is

the best way for our country to proceed.

I want to say that up front.

But we do have three choices and we

are confronted with some realities. I

think all of us would agree that Iraq

poses a threat. They have biological

and chemical weapons. We know that.

We know they have designs on reconstituting

their nuclear arsenal. They

are not there yet. They may not be

there for a year or so. But we know

they have intentions to do that. So we

agree there is a threat. Some of us

would observe that the threat is equal

to or certainly no greater than the

threats posed by many other countries,

Iran, North Korea, China, Syria. But I

think we all agree that it is in the interest

of the United States and the

world community that Iraq be disarmed.

So the question is what is the best

way to do that, and tomorrow we are

going to have three choices. The gentlewoman

from California (Ms. LEE)

would have us do this exclusively

through the United Nations; that we

would just work through the U.N. to

try to effect disarmament of Iraq. The

President’s resolution gives broad authority

to the President to do whatever

he sees fit to disarm Iraq and protect

this country. And then there is a third

alternative, the Spratt amendment,

which seeks to limit the broad authority

given to the President, but nothing

to the point that it ties the President’s hands.

I really believe, in looking at all

three proposals, that the Spratt

amendment makes the most sense.

First of all, it makes it clear that the

primary aim that we have is disarming

Iraq from all weapons of mass destruction.

It keeps the Congress engaged.

Whatever happened to keeping the

Congress engaged in what goes on in

our country? I have watched trade

agreements where we have abdicated

our responsibilities in trade agreements

to the executive branch, no

oversight with these fast track agreements.

And now we are talking about

maybe sending our sons and daughters

to war; and the Congress is ready to,

once again, just abdicate its oversight

to the executive branch. I think we

need to be engaged, and the Spratt

amendment allows us to be engaged.

The Spratt amendment commends

the President for taking the case

against Iraq to the United Nations. It

encourages him to persist in his efforts

to obtain Security Council approval.

And it calls on him to seek and also for

the Security Council to approve a new

resolution mandating tougher rounds

of arms inspections. We think this is

an important first step that thinks

that the first order of business should

be to get compliance through the Security Council first.

It also authorizes the use of force if

sanctioned by the Security Council. If

Iraq resists the weapons inspectors and

the new rounds of inspections fail, then

the Security Council is going to have

to confront the use of military force

against Iraq. And if they authorize

such force, as they did in 1990, the

President does not need any further approval

from Congress. He need not come back to us.

But if the Security Council does not

adopt the new resolution, or if the

President considers its resolution too

weak to wipe out Iraq’s weapons of

mass destruction, then the President

can seek, on an expedited basis, an upor-

down vote by the Congress to use

military force to eliminate Iraq’s

weapons of mass destruction.

Now, we ask that the President certify

that he has sought a new resolution

from the Security Council and

that it has either failed to pass that

resolution or it is insufficient; that

military force is necessary to make

Iraq comply; that the U.S. is forming

as broad based a coalition as it can;

and that military action against Iraq

will not interfere with the war on terrorism.

Security Council approval is in the

interest of the United States in the

long term, because it is going to help

persuade neighboring countries, especially

countries like Saudi Arabia and

Turkey, to grant us basing and overflight

rights and other means of support.

It allows moderate Arab and Muslim

states to support the U.S. action,

deflecting the resentment an attack on

Iraq by the U.S. alone would generate

in the Arab and Muslim populations,

and it enhances the chances of postwar

successes. Allies with us on the takeoff

are far more likely to be with us after the conflict.

Mr. Speaker, this is something we

need to think through. What is a post-

Saddam Iraq going to look like? How

many years and how many troops will

we have to station there? Mr. Speaker,

I think the answer is simple. In the

last few speeches, the President has

made it clear by saying he will not attack

Iraq without first attempting to

build an international coalition of support

from our allies. And I appreciate

that because I think that is the right way to go.

The Spratt amendment deals with

Iraq in the right way by providing for

a more thorough and narrowly focused

process that I believe increases significantly

our chances of success in this

delicate and difficult situation.

Mr. Speaker, I intend to support the

Spratt resolution. I think it is the

right way to go. I intend to vote

against the President’s resolution.