Mr. Speaker, today I

rise not as a Democrat, but as an

American who shares the belief with

President Bush that, once and for all,

the time has come to end the threat of

Saddam Hussein and his weapons of

mass destruction. For that reason, I intend

to support the authorization of

military force against Iraq, even as I

hope and pray for peace.

Saddam Hussein has been responsible

for the murder and deaths of hundreds

of thousands of men, women, and children.

How many more people, how

many more innocent victims must die

at his hands before the world finally

says enough is enough?

Saddam Hussein has built chemical

and biological weapons. He has pursued

the ultimate weapon of terror, a nuclear

bomb. How many more weapons

of mass destruction must he build before

the world finally says enough is

enough?

There comes a time when a tyrant’s

repeated disdain for the rules of civilized

society makes it necessary for

society to protect itself. I say that

time is now.

Some of my colleagues in Congress

say, in good faith, let us continue to

try diplomacy with Saddam Hussein,

and I respect their right to that view.

Eleven years ago, I too had hoped diplomacy

would have worked, in that

case to stop Saddam Hussein from his

unprovoked aggression against his

neighbor, Kuwait. The Arab League

tried diplomacy and failed. The European

Community tried diplomacy and

failed. The United Nations tried diplomacy

and failed. And for 11 long years

since, the world community, acting

through the United Nations, has tried

to use diplomacy to convince Saddam

Hussein to destroy his weapons of mass

destruction.

Once again, the world community

and diplomacy have failed.

Is that failure the fault of the United

States, the United Nations? Absolutely

not. The fault lies squarely with one

person and one person alone, Saddam

Hussein. He is the guilty one, not us.

The reality is that Saddam Hussein

is a terrorist of historic proportions

who has gassed his own citizens and

killed his own neighbors. Now with his

weapons of mass destruction he is a

genuine threat to his declared enemy,

the United States. Nothing, absolutely

nothing Saddam Hussein has done

since his invasion of Kuwait would suggest

that his disrespect for the rules of

civilized society has changed one iota.

If anything, that disrespect has grown

as he has arrogantly ignored U.N. resolution

after resolution, year after year.

Do I hope for peace without war? Fervently

so. Because I represent 40,000

soldiers in my district who may be sent

off to that war, and I represent their

families. Yet, sadly, 11 years of his actions

suggest Saddam Hussein has no

respect for the principles of diplomacy

and peace.

The responsibility to only use war as

a last resort does not negate the profound

obligation of the President and

Congress to protect American citizens

from weapons of mass destruction. The

United States as the one superpower in

the world has an abiding responsibility

to ensure that the terrorist attacks of

September 11 do not become a prelude

for biological, chemical or nuclear terrorism

either here or anywhere in the

world.

I respect President Bush, as I do his

father, for standing up to the menace

of Saddam Hussein. I applaud the

President’s recent challenge to the

United Nations. The interest of our Nation

and all nations will be served if

the U.N. enforces its resolutions

against Saddam Hussein and Iraq. But

if the U.N. does not take decisive action,

the threat posed by Saddam Hussein

and Iraq does not go away.

Tigers do not change their stripes,

and Saddam Hussein has not changed

his. Not in 11 years, and not now. He

was a brutal dictator, a dangerous dictator

over 11 years ago; and he is a brutal,

dangerous dictator today. The reality

is diplomacy has failed and delay

could be dangerous. The time to act is

now.