Mr. Speaker, more than 200 years ago, the first President of the

United States addressed the Nation’s first

Congress with these prophetic words, ‘‘the

preservation of the sacred fire of liberty and

the destiny of the Republican model of government

are . . . finally, staked on the experiment

entrusted to the hands of the American people.’’

Now we find ourselves in a new century,

confronted by new trials.

We have withstood attempts at invasion,

survived a bloody civil war, endured two world

wars and prevailed in the long twilight struggle

President Kennedy spoke of more than forty years ago.

Ten years ago, confronted by the specter of

Kuwait brutally overrun by Iraqi forces, the

United Nations and the United States led a coalition

of more than 28 nations in a war of liberation.

Then President Bush plainly outlined our

war aims. ‘‘Our objectives’’ he said ‘‘are clear.

Saddam Hussein’s forces will leave Kuwait.

The legitimate Government of Kuwait will be

restored. . . . and Kuwait will once again be free.’’ All of this was achieved.

He then went on to say that once peace

was restored, it was our Nation’s hope, ‘‘that

Iraq will live as a peaceful and cooperative

member of the family of nations.’’ this hope has gone unfulfilled.

And so, in Franklin Roosevelt’s words,

‘‘there has come a time, in the midst of swift

happenings, to pause for a moment and take

stock—to recall what our place in history has

been, and to rediscover what we are and what

we may be. There is no greater example of

what we are than how we responded to the

terrible events of September 11.

Confronted with a massacre of innocent

lives; the attack on the World Trade Center

and the Pentagon, and the horror of the instruments

of modern technology being used as

the means of our destruction, we did not falter.

In the weeks and months since, we have

buried our dead, cared for our wounded, aided

the widows and orphans, improved our defenses

and taken the war to our enemy.

Now we are asked to do more.

Over the past few months, I have agonized,

along with many of my neighbors and constituents,

on the degree of threat the renegade regime

in Iraq represents to our safety and security.

It is for these and other reasons that I set

the bar so high on what I would require before

I would embrace any presidential action that

included the use of force to remove Hussein

and his henchmen from power.

The most compelling reason, as I wrote to

my constituents was the realization that, ‘‘any

decision to finally remove Hussein and his regime,

once begun, could not be permitted to fail.

For those reasons, I urged the administration

to work to promote a regime change short of the use of the military option.

I went on to argue that, should those efforts

fail, then it was incumbent upon the administration

to make their case to the United Nations,

to the American people and to Congress

before inaugurating any major military undertaking against Iraq.

This they have done. Now it is time for us

to decide. I will vote ‘‘yes’’ on this resolution.

While I still hold out some hope that by its

passage the United Nations will be empowered,

to force Iraq to comply with the will of

the international community, that they eliminate

all their weapons of mass destruction, I

bear too great a responsibility to allow my actions

to be governed by that hope alone.

As a Member of Congress, I must act upon

information I possess in a way that most clearly

protects our people and our way of life. And

what I know is this. Should the U.N. fail in its

mission, we will have very little choice but to act.

I am now persuaded that, left to his own devices,

Saddam Hussein will not be content

until he has the means to murder his own

people and the people of many nations with

the most horrible weapons of war. This we cannot permit.

Neither can we permit him to cause the kind

of world economic blackmail and chaos that

could ensue, should he be allowed to continue

his arms build-up. As President Eisenhower

once observed, ‘‘We are linked to all free peoples

not merely by a noble idea but by a simple

need. No free people can for long cling to

any privilege or enjoy and safety in economic solitude.’’

I do not take this step lightly. To knowingly

spend the precious blood of our sons and

daughters and the wealth of this peaceable

people, even in the noblest cause, is a burden

no sensible man desires. But, in the end, our

place in the world as the pre-eminent champion

of human rights and human liberty leaves us very little choice.

At the close of his 3rd Inaugural Address,

on the eve of our Nation’s being drawn into

the Second World War, Franklin Roosevelt

spoke these words, ‘‘In the face of great perils

never before encountered, our strong purpose

is to protect and to perpetuate the integrity of

democracy. For this we muster the spirit of

America, and the faith of America. We do not

retreat. We are not content to stand still. As

Americans, we go forward, in the service of country. . . .’’