Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman of the Permanent

Select Committee on Intelligence for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about what will be the most difficult

vote many of us will ever cast. The decision

to authorize our President to use

force is never an easy one. Leadership

is never easy. Like many people in my

district, I struggled with this decision.

Just as I do not believe any of my constituents

wants to go to war, I do not believe any person in this Chamber

wants to go to war. But there are those

in this world who may leave us no

choice. They have already declared war

on America. That is where we find ourselves today.

Much has changed in our country

since the attacks of September 11. We

have awakened to a world in which the

threats that existed before only outside

of our borders are now very real inside

of them. None of us will ever forget

that day, the horror, and then explaining

to our children how the most powerful

Nation in the world, in a matter of seconds, became one of its most vulnerable.

On September 11 we lost over 3,000

people. They were ordinary Americans

going about the business of their lives

when they became victims of the global

war that terrorists have launched

against America. They were not the

first victims. Throughout the 1990s, al

Qaeda and other terrorist organizations

attacked our Nation. We did not

heed the warning signs. We see these warning signs in Iraq now.

Saddam Hussein has already used

weapons of mass destruction against

his own people and the people of Iran.

He has systematically thwarted every

attempt by the United Nations to conduct

thorough inspections of his chemical,

biological and nuclear arms-making

capabilities. He has ignored a decade plus of U.N. resolutions.

The question now is how long do we

wait? Do we wait for a dictator who has

shown no limits in his willingness to

flaunt international law, to killing innocent

people? Do we wait to give al

Qaeda or some other terrorist group a

weapon of mass destruction that Saddam

Hussein has provided to them?

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that

Saddam Hussein is a threat to our Nation

and to the peace of this planet. He

is a rogue leader seeking the world’s

deadliest weapons, and there is little

doubt he will use them for his own evil

purposes. Now is the time for the U.S.

to lead, to demonstrate real leadership

at the United Nations, to demonstrate

our conviction and resolve to the dissidents

in Iraq that we stand with them. By exercising leadership in the world

community, we will send a powerful

message to Saddam and terrorists that

peace-loving nations and peace-loving

people will not stand by silently as they threaten the values that we stand

for. In times of crisis, America has always

led. Now is the time for the President,

for this Congress, and for America

to once again show leadership in a dangerous world.