Mr. Speaker, should Congress authorize the President to

use the Armed Forces of the United

States to attack Iraq? The President is

asking us to pass this resolution now,

but he has not yet made the case for war.

I cannot support the President’s request

that we authorize military force

against Iraq. I make this very difficult

decision for three important reasons:

The United States is not acting in selfdefense

or from an imminent threat

from Iraq, the United States should not

be pursuing unilateral action without

international support, and the President

has not stated an exit strategy. I believe there are times when countries

must resort to war, and indeed international law recognizes the rights

of nations to defend themselves. I

strongly support our campaign against

terrorism. But are we voting this week

on a case of self-defense? It would certainly

be self-defense if Iraq supported the al Qaeda attack on September 11,

but the evidence of such support is lacking.

I have listened to the administration

and met with top officials. I have yet

to see any credible evidence that Iraq

is connected with al Qaeda. The experts

readily admit that there is no real connection.

I can believe that Iraq is a threat to

the region and to some American interests

overseas, but I do not believe the

threat is imminent or must be handled

with a unilateral military strike.

The President is now choosing a new

and dangerous policy, the America

Strikes First Doctrine, when he argues

we can attack any time we feel threatened.

I am the mother of a 17-year-old son.

Maybe that is why I understand when

mothers ask me about Iraq. A life lost

to save America is a stinging pain that

will always be with a Gold Star Mother.

But the knowledge that the loss was

necessary to protect the home of the

brave and the land of the free gives both comfort and cause.

Is America prepared to sacrifice lives

when the cause is not to defend America

but to start a war unilaterally without a threat? I have not heard the

American people say so. We would be having a far different

debate had President Bush come to

Congress leading the world community

and the United Nations or NATO. As of

this moment, Great Britain is the only

other nation dedicated to military action

with us in Iraq. When even Canada

is not prepared to march by our side, we have cause to pause and reflect. The

United States should be leading the

world, working with the world community

to resolve an international issue.

We should be here, Mr. Speaker, debating

a resolution because all other efforts

have failed. Sadly, we are here discussing an end result with no end game in mind.

This resolution is an unwise step for

America that will in the end weaken

America. We are at our best when we

are first among allies, standing tall for

the free world. Let us be at our best when we deal with Iraq.

For these reasons, Mr. Speaker, I will not vote to authorize the President to

carry out a unilateral and costly

ground war against Iraq.