Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of House Joint Resolution

114 and the need to protect the United States

from any threat posed by Iraq. However, my

support for the resolution is coupled with several

concerns associated with potential unilateral action against Iraq.

The September 11 attacks on the United

States demonstrated the will of misguided,

vengeful leaders whose determination to harm

Americans seem boundless. Clearly, Saddam

Hussein is one of these leaders. This dictator

harbors terrorists, invokes chemical warfare

upon his own people and openly defies United

Nations Security Council Resolutions. His support

of international terrorism, and pursuit of

stockpiling weapons of mass destruction

poses not only a threat to the United States, but also to the world.

Since 1998, this body has voted on four

separate measures that appropriate funds for

Iraqi opposition forces, as well as call upon

Iraq to allow U.N. inspectors immediate, unconditional

and unrestricted access to areas

they wish to inspect. Today’s resolution takes

a step further and acknowledges that sanctions,

weapons inspection and containment

have failed. It recognizes that Iraq and Saddam

Hussein present an unrelenting hostility

to the United States. And we know when it

comes to the United States, Hussein has a

very prolific partner in hate: al Qaeda. In fact,

Saddam Hussein has openly praised the September 11 attacks.

The resolution before us authorizes United

States military force under two circumstances:

(1) In order to defend our national security

against a threat by Iraq, and (2) enforce U.N.

Security Council Resolutions relevant to Iraq.

Disarming Iraq is necessary to ensure our

national security. I was encouraged to hear

President Bush emphasize that Iraq can avoid

military force if all weapons of mass destruction

are destroyed. I hope that Saddam Hussein will heed this advice.

I was also encouraged to hear President

Bush stress the importance of seeking a coalition,

as I believe the support of the United Nations

Security Council is critical. The President

must persist in his efforts with the U.N. to approve

a tougher inspection resolution. If inspection

efforts fail, a U.N.-sanctioned military

force is the best course of action, as it would

garner support in neighboring countries, and

enhance the chances of post-war success. If

the U.N. were to fail to authorize force, then

the President should come back to Congress

and let us have a say about whether we go in unilaterally.

Finally, I was glad to hear the President

pledge to rebuild a post-war Iraqi economy.

This is very important, as the cost of military

action must not only be weighed economically, but regionally.

Although this is one of the most difficult

votes a Member of Congress will cast, I’m

afraid it is an inevitable action needed to protect

the United States from Iraq and the destructive

weapons it seeks to acquire and use.

Today, each and every member will vote

their conscience. Regardless of how we each

vote, at the end of the day we must remember

one thing: that we represent the people of the

United States and we must come together as

a body, and a people, just as we did on September 11.