Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished gentleman

from New Jersey for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I join with my colleagues

on both sides of the aisle in

this historic debate with some trepidation

and troubled feelings. I have

been marshaling views, like many of

my esteemed colleagues, not only to

contribute to this dialogue but, more

poignantly, to try to make sense of

what lies ahead for our great country.

Each Member has been consumed

with this very critical issue. I am sure

that none of us wants a war, as we

know its great cost in human capital.

Therefore, we must go the extra mile

necessary to exhaust all possibilities

before America commits to force. That

is why this debate is so critical. And

the implications of our decision that

follows will have such portent, not

only for us but also for the parents of

the young men and women whom we

ask to make perhaps the greatest sacrifice.

Until this past weekend, I was quite

undecided as to how to respond to the

President’s insistence on moving

against Iraq, and I took particular notice

of the open-ended nature of the

original draft resolution. Now, as the

result of ongoing discussions with the

leadership of the House and Senate, he

has thought twice in seeking unilateral

authority. Instead, this revised resolution

allows for a preemptive use of

force against Iraq and for his reporting

to Congress after the fact. In short, Mr.

Speaker, more questions were raised in

my mind than answers given.

In the past, I have voted to support

legislation designed to protect America’s

security. After 9–11, I was a clear

and avid supporter of many pieces of

legislation to support the President.

Thus, I believe it is clear to all observers

that I am a woman of conscience

and not afraid to go on record when

this Nation is faced with a clear and

present danger to our way of life, our

liberties, and our security.

I too believe that the world is dealing

with a tyrannical dictator in Iraq and

that he should not be allowed to terrorize

neighboring states nor his own

citizens. Saddam Hussein must and

should be stopped. But how? What is

the best and most appropriate way to

contain him and destroy his unbridled

power? Is it by having the U.S. go

alone to confront this geopolitical

problem that has a far-reaching impact

on the entire world?

That is why this debate needs to be

thorough and public, Mr. Speaker. We

must look at the long-term domestic

and international consequences and

policy implications of intervening in

Iraq. Before a declaration of war can be

proclaimed, there must be an accounting

of the cost both at home and abroad.

In his talk to the American people

this past Monday, the President upped

the ante, so to speak, and I, for one,

was pleased to hear him say that war is

the last resort. We must not forget

that we are already fighting a war in

Afghanistan and are deeply obligated

to help bring security and reconstruction

to that country. The costs are

great, more than $1 billion a month.

Can we continue to meet such expenditures?

How long will our commitments

continue there? Can we afford to fight

two wars? What is the exit strategy

after we go into Iraq when there is

none in place for Afghanistan as yet?

Mr. Speaker, many of my constituents

have overwhelmingly called me to

let me know they do not stand for having

their sons and daughters go to war

and return home in body bags until all

possible diplomatic avenues have been

exhausted. They want to see us, the political

leaders of this great country,

commit ourselves to working with the

United Nations in every conceivable

manner to exercise international action

against a tyrant in Iraq. They

want to see us enter into a rigorous

international alliance under the U.N.’s

banner to force the dismantling of

Iraq’s massive weaponry through a

comprehensive inspection system.

The American people are not fools.

They know that war with Iraq inevitably

will mean that their domestic

priorities would suffer from a lack of

attention and resources. Our unfinished

business on health care, prescription

drugs, welfare reform, and a faltering

economy, due in large part to

corporate greed and malfeasance, and

the President’s top tax cut, would remain

on the back burner.

I agree that Iraq has carried out regression

on its own people and has not

met its obligations under the U.N. resolutions.

Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting

this resolution.