Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me

this time to speak, and I rise today

with a heavy heart over one of the

most difficult decisions that we as

elected officials are called upon to

make. It is literally a decision of life or death.

As a mother who has raised nine children,

I cannot help but think about

this issue on a personal basis. Can I or

can any parent look into the eyes of an

18-year-old boy and with a clear mind

and clear conscience say that we have

exhausted every other option before

sending him into the perils of conflict?

Are we certain that the strongest possible case has been made that the

threat posed by Iraq rises to the level

of risking the lives of tens of thousands

of our young citizens? Can we say to

that young man with sufficient moral

certainty that the time must be now,

and that we can afford to work no

longer on an alternative to war?

Mr. Speaker, the world is watching

us today as we show how the world’s

last remaining superpower sees fit to

use its great influence. We are looked

to as we set an example for the world.

Are we a Nation that will work within

the world community, or will we go it

alone? Are we willing to exhaust every

possible chance for a peaceful resolution,

or are we ready now to commit to war? Have we made the strongest case

for action that we can make to the

world? And do we honestly have a plan for a post-war Iraq?

This great struggle against evil is not a Christian struggle, a Jewish

struggle, or a Muslim struggle. It is a

common struggle among people of all

faiths. But as a Nation of Christians,

Jews, Muslims and Hindus, and as a

Member who represents a district of all

of these faiths, we should look toward

the common thread of all our beliefs

that it is our responsibility to win this

struggle through peace, through negotiation,

through coalition building, and

as an international, not unilateral, effort.

As the world’s last superpower, I believe that we must have a better plan

for our Nation and for the world for a

post-war Iraq. We must reassure those

neighbors in the Middle East that we

are committed first to peace and stability and second to regime change.

And we must not give our friends and

foes in the region more reason to distrust

our sincerity and desire for peace

by ignoring the world community’s

role in addressing this problem.

I commend our President for his commitment

to protecting our national security and his honest heartfelt desire

to do what he thinks is right to make

our world safe for democracy and safe

for future generations. I know that in

his heart he will continue to do what is

right. But I believe as a Nation we owe

it to ourselves and to those of other nations

who would fall victim to the horror

of this war to make sure that every other option has been exhausted before

we take this final and irrevocable step

of authorizing full-scale military action.

I will follow my conscience and vote

against House Joint Resolution 114.