Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this resolution. It is both reasonable and

necessary. At its essence, our debate is about the critical

need to ensure Saddam Hussein fully understands

our resolve to protect our citizens

and to promote peace around the world. There

is no question we would all prefer it if the path

ahead did not include military action. Unfortunately,

Saddam Hussein may not allow us that option.

The President and other members of his administration

have provided a sober, convincing

picture of the threats our nation faces from

Iraq’s current regime. As the President said

earlier this week, ‘‘While there are many dangers

in the world, the threat from Iraq stands

alone because it gathers the most serious

dangers of our age in one place.’’

And this ‘‘one place’’ is led by an evil, evil

dictator who directs his intense hatred toward

America, Americans, our interests and our allies.

Iraq’s leadership has continued to aggressively

pursue the development of weapons of

mass destruction to add to his arsenal. We’ve

all talked about these weapons but it’s worth

spelling out what they can be: chemical weapons,

biological weapons and even nuclear

weapons. Saddam Hussein has shown his

cruel willingness to use such devastating

weapons against his own citizens and his

neighboring countries in the past. I sincerely

doubt he’s had a change of heart.

We must also not ignore the support of terrorism

found in Hussein’s Iraq. September 11,

2001 was a horrific reminder that terrorists are

serious in their intent to harm Americans. This

step is a continuation of the war against terrorism

that our nation has been forced to undertake.

It is Saddam Hussein himself who provides

the final proof that we must act. He has a robust

history of disregard of the international

community and its laws. Time and again, he

has willingly and defied the United Nations

and the world community by ignoring the

agreements he has made. He has constructed

a wall of delay and deception that at times is

as thick as the cloud of black smoke from the

malicious oil fires that greeted our troops in

1991 as they liberated Kuwait.

It’s obvious that Iraq’s current regime presents

problems not just for the United States,

but problems for international peace and stability.

We can not deny the seriousness of the

situation, and I believe America should provide

its leadership for the sake of peace and justice.

The President has earned our confidence

through his leadership since last fall’s terrorist

attacks. The President is determined to pursue

a course of action with regard to Iraq that will

both ensure our own nation’s security and promote

international stability and I support his efforts.

At the same time, I want to make it clear

that I respect those who have sincere opposing

views on the question before us. The freedom

to disagree is one among many freedoms

that we are vigorously trying to preserve and

I would never want that to change. Few in Iraq

who disagree with Saddam Hussein can share their opinions openly.

The resolution we are considering makes it

clear that America prefers to find solutions together

with the United Nations and other international

leaders. It also provides authority for

the President to use force if diplomatic or

other peaceful means are not effective. It preserves

America’s right to act on its own as we

must in self-defense of our nation’s interests.

Mr. Speaker, the first major vote I took as

a Member of Congress in 1991 was to support

the international coalition’s effort to liberate

Kuwait from Iraqi aggressors. No one wanted

war then, but it was necessary. No one wants

war now. We don’t seek it. It is my fervent

hope that war with Iraq may yet be avoided.

And it may. But our shared and firm commitment

to the security of our nation should not

be questioned by Saddam Hussein or the

world community.