Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support H.J. Res. 114, a resolution granting

President Bush the authorization to use military

force against Iraq. Never in my 8 years as

a Member of Congress has there been a vote

with as far reaching consequences as this one.

I am under no illusions. War is a serious matter with the real possibility of casualties. I

have given this decision a great deal of thought, have sought wise counsel and have

spent much time in prayer. It is with a heavy

heart that I have come to the conclusion that

military action against Iraq may be our only option.

For more than a decade the United States has been working with the United Nations and

the international community to use diplomatic

means to bring a peaceful solution to the troubling

situation in Iraq. We had all hoped Saddam

Hussein and his regime would ultimately

comply with what the United Nations has demanded.

Instead, he has violated, disregarded and openly flouted the 16 U.N. resolutions.

We now know Saddam Hussein is actively seeking nuclear weapons capability, and with

fissile material, could build one within a year.

A nuclear strike made against us or our allies

in the region could result in millions dead. Either

Saddam Hussein acquires a nuclear weapon, or we ensure he is stopped. Additionally,

Hussein may have the propensity to sell or given nuclear weapons to terrorist organizations

one he had acquired them. This could have devastating results.

Traditional nuclear deterrence and containment will not be effective with this regime.

Hussein has consistently shown no moral concern

for the Iraqi people. Instead, he has a record of acting with selfish deeds of violence

against his own family and people. He has

mortgaged everything in an effort to obtain nuclear

weapon capability. In fighting international

sanctions, he has forfeited $180 billion in oil revenue, impoverished many of his

people and allowed degradation of his military forces.

Saddam Hussein has already shown the

propensity to use chemical weapons on his

neighbors in the region and on his own people,

and he continues to possess and develop

significant chemical and biological weapons

capability. One source indicates that Saddam

Hussein has already used chemical and biological weapons 250 times.

In addition to these threats, the Iraqi regime

continues to aid and harbor international terrorist

organizations, including groups that have threatened the lives and safety of American citizens.

I have had the opportunity to participate in

several classified briefings led by President

Bush, National Security Advisor Condoleezza

Rice and Deputy Director of Central Intelligence John McLaughlin. I am convinced that

Iraq poses an unquestionable and near-term

threat to the peace and security of the United States and our allies abroad.

We can not allow those who wish harm on the United States, and have the propensity to

deliver that harm, to acquire weapons of terror

and mass destruction. Inaction on our part

could lead to the massive loss of innocent

lives. The ten-year cat and mouse game Hussein

has played with weapons inspectors must

come to an end. There is too much at stake,

and time is rapidly dwindling. I believe it is in the national security interest

of the United States to prevent Saddam Hussein

from obtaining a nuclear weapon and to

prosecute the war on terrorism, including

Iraq’s support for international terrorist groups.

President Bush must continue his efforts to

get support from the United Nations Security

Council and must exhaust all reasonable diplomatic

options available in hopes of avoiding war. However, if Saddam Hussein and the

Iraqi regime continue to rebuff the international

community and threaten the peace and security

of the United States, we must take swift and decisive action. To do anything less would be immoral and irresponsible.

Mr. Speaker, I support this resolution and

urge my colleagues on both sides of the isle to do the same.