Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr.

Speaker, the House is engaged in a

great and serious debate on an issue of

incredible importance; and, given the

strong arguments on both sides, we

may have missed the fact that we actually

agree on many points.

We all agree with the President that

Saddam Hussein is a brutal dictator.

We all agree with the President that

both Iraq and the world would be better

off without him. We all agree with

the President that Iraq must be rid of

its weapons of mass destruction. So, as

the President said on Monday night, we

all agree on the goal. The issue is how

best to achieve it.

Right now, we have two choices. We

can vote for the resolution before us, or

we can vote against it. If we vote for it

we are, in effect, granting the President

unprecedented authority to

launch a unilateral, preemptive strike

against Iraq.

Much has been made of the fact that

the resolution is not the blank check

originally submitted by the President,

that concessions have been made, that

under the current resolution the President

is required to exhaust all diplomatic

measures before launching an attack

on Iraq, that the President is required

to give Congress prior notice of

such an attack.

Rhetoric and semantics aside, this is

still a blank check. The President

alone makes the final determination of

exhaustion of diplomatic remedies.

This resolution simply adds a step to

the process. It will not have an impact

on the final decision. It will not give

Congress a greater role in the decision

making. Notice to Congress is a mere

formality.

Sadly, proper deference has not been

given to the authority vested in the

Congress by the Constitution to exercise

the power to declare war. The

Founders must have believed, as I do

now, that the power to wage war is too

awesome a power to vest in the executive.

War is too dangerous and too important

a matter to be left to the discretion

of one man or woman.

This war would be especially dangerous.

We would be acting alone, not

only without allies but also with the

hostile condemnation of the rest of the

Arab world. We would undermine the

war against terrorism and, indeed, increase

the risk of future terrorist attacks

against our own country. We

would undermine the authority and

mission of the United Nations, our best

hope for a peaceful solution.

It is dangerous to go forward without

knowing how long this war will take;

without knowing how many lives will

be lost, military and civilian; how

much it will cost; how much of a drain

it will be on our already dangerously

weak economy; how long it will take to

rebuild a devastated Iraq; and whether

Iraq will ever be a viable democracy.

So, before we vote, we must ask, why

now? Why the rush? There is too much

danger lurking in the unknown and the

untried. With the election only weeks

away, there is too much of the taint of

political expediency to gain the trust

of our international friends.

I cannot support this resolution. I

will support the United Nations leading

an international coalition to disarm

Iraq. At the very least, we should give

the U.N. a chance before we embark on

the dangerous path this resolution takes us.

I will vote against H.J. Res. 114.