Mr. Speaker, I thank the

gentleman from New Jersey for yielding

me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I was at home this

weekend; and on Saturday morning at

my very first town hall meeting, the

first speaker or questioner got up and

said, You know, I don’t understand all

this talk about Iraq in Washington,

D.C. I have been out of work for over a

year. I work in high tech. I have been

looking hard and I have not been able

to find a job, and all I hear about in

Washington is this talk of war in Iraq.

What are you going to do about the economy?

I gave the man the best answer I

could, the things that I have been trying

to do, some of which have been

passed, some of which have not. This

Congress owes that Oregonian that answer

about that economy, and this government

ultimately owes that Oregonian

an answer also.

But we are here today on the most

serious of topics, whether to send

American men and women to war, and

I oppose the resolution to grant the

President’s unilateral authority to go

to war. Make no mistake about it, I

would not hesitate to use force if there

were sufficient evidence of an imminent

threat to the United States, our

allies, or our military forces; but in all

the briefings that I have attended, in

all of my study and research, I have

not found sufficient evidence of an imminent

threat to us, our allies, or our

military. And if there were, the main

resolution that we are considering delegates

so much war-making power to

one person, I believe that if the Founders

of this Republic were to read this

resolution, they would tremble at the

thought that one individual ever in

America would have such terrible

power in his or her hands no matter

how much we trust that person or no

matter how much we like that person.

That is not the American way, to put

so much unilateral power into one person’s hands.

The gentleman from South Carolina’s

(Mr. SPRATT) resolution is a much better

solution to this problem. It requires

the President to take all steps and

then to come back after exhausting

diplomatic and other means.

I want to also seriously address the

new first-strike doctrine which is being

advocated by this administration. It is

not a preemption doctrine because preemption

assumes that there is an imminent

danger and that is what we are

preempting. This doctrine allows for

first strikes even absent imminent danger.

Where will we draw the line? Will we

strike next at the other nations of the

Axis of Evil? What about Pakistan

with a nuclear capacity and known ties

to terrorists? Where will other countries

draw the line? There are at least

half a dozen hot spots around the world

where conflicts could be of a conventional

or a nuclear nature.

For over 200 years we have rarely

been the first to shoot. For over 200

years American Presidents have taken

a united America to war. Lincoln, Wilson,

Roosevelt, Kennedy, they all made

their public case that war was necessary

and that there was an imminent

threat. The exceptions: President

Madison, President Johnson. I do not

think that we want to fall into the historic

situations in which those two

Presidents ultimately found themselves.

This first-strike doctrine puts

us on the edge of a terrible, terrible precipice.

The vote on this resolution is a foregone

conclusion. I think it is a foregone

conclusion that we will be at war

in January. We are fighting against the

second war, the third war, the fourth

war, the fifth war. We are trying to cut

that chain of wars off as soon as we

can. But make no mistake about it,

with this first strike, with this first

war, we will lose the high moral ground

that has taken Americans 200 years to

build. We will no longer be in a position

through moral suasion or otherwise

to be an example to the world, for

democracy, human rights, and the rule

of law. We will not be able to have others

stay their hand by the example of us staying ours.

From the Lexington Green to Fort

Sumpter, from the submarine campaign

in the north Atlantic before our

entry into World War I to the Cuban

Missile Crisis, American Presidents

have been restrained in their use of power.

Let not the innocent 3,000 of September

11 die in vain. If we lash out, if

we strike blindly, if we start a series of

wars because of September 11, we will

have given Osama bin Laden what he

wanted. Let us stop as soon as we can.