Mr. Speaker,

I rise in support of the resolution.

Mr. Speaker, every fourth of July, we celebrate

our national independence. It’s a day

when nearly all of us have the day off from

work, a day when we can gather with our families

for a cook out, and maybe attend the

local parade or spend the day lounging by the

pool. It’s a day when we can see the latest

Hollywood Blockbuster—this past year it was

Pearl Harbor, a movie based on what, until

this past Tuesday, was the most horrible attack

ever on American soil.

Because vacation days are so hard to come

by, many of us base our vacations around the

4th. This isn’t necessarily for the sake of the

holiday, but to simply save a vacation day.

And while there’s nothing wrong with any of

the above practices, time and prosperity have

mellowed the significance of our national birthday,

as they have Memorial Day and Veterans

Day.

Mr. Speaker, that’s unfortunate for the simple

reason that on nights like this one, we’re

reminded that no one gave us our freedom.

No one gave us our liberty. And while their underlying

principles were germinated in peaceful

venues and distributed on pamphlets or

word of mouth, ultimately they were borne

through battle.

Maybe our children don’t understand, but

the United Nations wasn’t there to let our forefathers

conduct a plebiscite on whether the 13

colonies should remain part of England.

Maybe we’ve become so used to living side-by-

side with African Americans we forget there

wasn’t any multi-national force willing to die by

the tens of thousands to free their ancestors

from slavery. And maybe we’ve grown so

used to violence as entertainment the grainy

images of Pearl Harbor don’t affect us any

more—now we need a Hollywood movie to

convey the importance of a national tragedy.

Mr. Speaker, as we consider this resolution

tonight, remember this: our freedom, our unity,

our very way of life exist because previous

generations of Americans have time and time

again been willing to place a higher value on

our freedom than on their own lives.

As much as I disdain the notion that taking

human life is a decision for politicians to

make—events of this week have placed us in

a position where, as previous members of this

body have done before, we must ask our fellow

citizens to once again fight those who detest

all we stand for.

To all my colleagues assembled here tonight,

understand this: there will be Americans

who will not survive the fighting to come.

There will be casualties, both physical and

psychological. There will be parents who lose

their only children. There will be spouses who

lose their soulmates, and children who will be

orphaned. There will be small towns who will

lose the child who sang the best in the church

choir, and big city neighborhoods who see

young person always playing basketball come

home without legs, or without arms.

If we are going to send Americans to forever

silence those working to sow terror and

horror against our Nation, then let us do everything

in our power to ensure they have the

resources to achieve a total victory.

Let us ensure that when they come home

Congress honors their sacrifice, not solely with

parades, but for the rest of their lives.

Let us pledge tonight that veterans of this

and every war are treated as first-class citizens,

as well as the millions of Americans who

served our nation without having to fire a shot

in anger. No longer should they have to wait

weeks for medical treatment. No longer should

they be homeless on our streets or go without

psychological treatment if needed. No longer

should our retirees see their pensions hijacked

to help balance our budget.

War is a serious business, and we shouldn’t

take what we’re about to do lightly. Yes, the

attacks of September 11, 2001 require us to

eradicate an enemy that has proven to be

more deadly than any we’ve ever faced. Support

this resolution, and support our men and

women in the armed forces. But remember

their sacrifices not just today, but years from

now after they have won this war, when Memorial

Day or the 4th of July are once again

excuses to take a break from work or to spend

an afternoon off enjoying ourselves with

friends and family.