Mr. Speaker,

I rise tonight with a heavy heart.

The floor we stand on here is the centerpiece

of American democracy. It has been the

site of weighty debates, presidential addresses,

and critical votes. I have witnessed and

participated in many of these since I was first

elected to represent the people of North Carolina’s

3rd District in 1994. As a servant of the

people, these events are all humbling.

However the vote we are poised to take

today is one of my most significant votes in

my congressional career—and the most important

type of vote that Congress ever takes.

Today we vote to authorize the Commander-in-

Chief to send our brave men and women in

uniform into harm’s way.

This is not a vote to be taken lightly. We do

so with righteous cause—to respond to the

despicable acts of war committed against the

American people and the very freedoms and

ideals for which our Nation stands. And we do

so with the solemn understanding that some

of the men and women that we send to fight

this new war may not return. They may be

from districts around the country—they may

be from my own.

But the action we take tonight is absolutely

necessary.

Our Nation was violated, our people slaughtered,

our democracy threatened. Justice must

be delivered—the victims of this tragedy deserve

it and the American people demand it.

This resolution will demonstrate to the

world—and most importantly those who committed

these horrendous crimes—that the

United States will respond. And when she

does, it will be with the full weight and support

of the President, this Congress, and the American

people.

Let me be clear—this is not just a vote

about the use of force or even terrorism. This

is a vote to protect the freedoms of the people

of the United States of America. I urge my colleagues

to join me in that effort by supporting

this important resolution.

God bless our President, God bless the

men and women in uniform who will carry out

this conflict, and God bless our great Nation.