Mr. Speaker, in the aftermath

of the recent terrorist attacks on the United

States, Americans have responded to the

cries of their fellow citizens. From the many

emergency personnel who arrived moments

after the first impact, to the volunteers from all

over the country arriving to help or donate

blood, to the United States Congress, who has

appropriated $40 billion help pay for recovery

efforts, we have responded. Now it is time to

plan the next part of our response: how to

punish the perpetrators of this attack and how

to protect ourselves in the future.

Our country has come together to get

through this time of great tragedy. Members

on both sides of the aisle have appropriately

put aside partisan politics and present a unified

front against terrorism.

Most Americans feel that we should strike

back at the individuals, groups, or nations that

were involved in these atrocities. I, too, think

we should respond to this heinous attack,

bring those involved to justice, and put an end

to global terrorism. That said, however, I do

not believe—even in times of extreme crisis—

that the Congress should turn over our constitutional

responsibilities to the President. The

resolution we are debating today, I fear, begins

to do just that.

When writing the Constitution, our Founding

Fathers created a balance of powers between

the three branches of government to prevent

one branch from inappropriately dominating

another. Although the Constitution empowers

the President as Commander in Chief, it gives

the Congress the sole power of declaring war.

This resolution gives the President the power

to conduct a war without reporting to or consulting

with Congress. Frankly stated, it cedes

congressional authority to the President.

I have real reservations about the resolution

we are considering today. It should contain explicit

language ensuring that the President reports

to Congress and consults with us in

planning and executing a military response.

But it does not.

That being said, this resolution is better than

earlier versions that were considered. It now

makes clear that nothing supersedes the War

Powers Act, which requires the President to

report and consult with Congress.

Given those facts, I will support the resolution

before us today. However, I will continue

to insist that the President make Congress an

integral part of our nation’s response to these

attacks. To do otherwise goes against the best

interest of the people we represent and the

democracy we seek to protect.