Mr. Speaker, I

yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, in the years since we

enacted our attack against Iraq, the

threat from Iran has only grown more

difficult, and our capacity to meet that

threat actually has diminished. It is

one of the reasons many of us opposed

that action against Iraq.

There is no question Iran’s President

is a thug, an anti-Semite, and a dangerous

man. He exploits Iranian national

grievances to consolidate power

and has openly expressed his desire to

wipe Israel off the map. Well, our

troops are bogged down in Iraq, placing

them at risk should Iran launch a wave

of terrorism. We have done nothing to

break our global dependency on oil, the

control of which gives Iran its greatest

ability to blackmail other countries.

Now, I appreciate the good will and

passion of the sponsors of this bill,

bringing a critical issue before us. I

rise in opposition, however. We have

been at this point before. We passed an

earlier version of this bill. The Senate

rejected it as an amendment to the defense

authorization. I appreciate that

there have been some positive changes

that have been made to this legislation.

One is a sunset. The earlier bill

would have made it permanent.

And I appreciate that it contains a

provision that I authored that would

prohibit assistance to groups who had

appeared on the State Department’s

list of terrorist groups in the last 4

years. However, the problem is nothing

in this legislation points us in the direction

of a solution. It is, if you will,

a cruise missile aimed at a difficult

diplomatic effort just as they are

reaching their most sensitive point.

The timing for this legislation could

not be worse.

While the United States has largely

been missing in action from the diplomatic

game, the European Union and

Iran have been making progress at developing

a formula that would lead to

the suspension of Iran’s nuclear enrichment

program and the start of serious

negotiations. This bill specifically targets

Russia, which may have some influence

with Iran and which is critical

to a unified diplomatic front.

This bill has another fundamental

flaw besides sanctioning people whose

help we need to reach a diplomatic solution.

It gives equal weight to overthrowing

the Iranian government as it

does to nonproliferation. These two

goals work against each other.

Yes, the regime’s human rights

record is atrocious, but preventing

them from developing nuclear weapons

should be our first priority. By not

prioritizing behavior change over regime

change, we pull the rug out from

anyone in the Iranian leadership who

values survival over the nuclear program

and eliminates incentives for diplomatic

solutions.

Now, in my opinion, Iran holds, if not

the key, a key to many of the issues

that confound us in the Middle East.

Their cooperation ultimately is going

to be critical if we are going to be able

to deal with the mess that our policies

have created in Iraq, the problems that

we are facing in Afghanistan with a resurgence

of the Taliban, and it is going

to play a key role on issues that deal

with Israel, Hezbollah, and Hamas.

They are like a puzzle. And, sadly, Iran

is one of the missing pieces.

After September 11, when the United

States took action to overthrow the

Taliban, our interests and Iran’s

aligned, and we were able to coordinate

quietly but effectively. They were partners

with us at some tough sessions in

Bonn when we were having the negotiations

that set up the Afghanistan government.

And in the midst of this tentative

effort at cooperation, President

Bush decided to declare Iran part of the

axis of evil and most hope for progress

disappeared.

Mr. Speaker, the irony is that Iran is

one of the few nations in the world

where the majority of the people still

have a positive view of the United

States.

This is difficult. It is not easy. But to

simply sanction potential partners and

confuse what our priorities are, I am

sad to say, is going to be a step backward.

We ought to make clear to Iran

that they need to stop their support for

terrorism, end development of nuclear

capacity, and begin the process of free,

fair, and open elections. But I am sorry

to say that this legislation in front of

us ignores the opportunities that we

have incorporating the lessons we

learned in our success with Libya.

I respectfully suggest that this is legislation

that we ought to reject, and

that we ought to instead prioritize

what our goals are with Iran, and we

are going to. By all means, have our

sanctions but not be reckless in terms

of the pressure we try to exert against

the very people who are going to be

necessary to help us with a diplomatic

solution to prevent nuclear proliferation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of

my time.

Mr. Speaker, I

yield myself the balance of my time to

close.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentlewoman’s

work because the bill that we

have before us, as I mentioned earlier,

is, a substantial improvement over the

one that was approved by the House

earlier this year. I had hoped it would

come back to our committee because I

think these issues are worthy of further

discussion, and there is more finetuning

we could do.

For instance, dealing with the provisions

for terms of the promotion of democracy,

reading the language that is

in this bill, the Ayatollah Khomeini, in

exile in France, would have qualified

for U.S. assistance. We could have had

a debacle like we had with Chalabi. I

don’t think it is as tight and precise as

we would like.

But most important, it fails to deal

with the fundamental choice we need

to make between whether we want regime

change or whether we want to

stop nuclear proliferation.

I deeply appreciate the points raised

by the gentleman from Iowa (Mr.

LEACH). We could end up actually making

the situation worse.

I am deeply troubled that we are

going to ratchet up the pressure on the

very people who we most need for a

diplomatic solution, the people like

China and Russia who are going to be

key to ultimately resolving it.

Mr. Speaker, part of the problem

that we have great difficulty with is

that some of the most disagreeable

people, some of the most dangerous

people, are people that we ignore at our

peril. We should not do that. We should

engage them directly, diplomatically

and not under the auspices of this bill,

which I hope that the House will reject.