Madam Speaker, I

would like to begin my remarks with

words of appreciation for Mr. Robert

Knotts, who served with distinction as

my legislative director and who will be

leaving our office next week to further

advance his career. I want to express

my appreciation to Robert, Madam

Speaker, for the service he has given to

our constituents and the fine work he

has done as a member of this institution.

He has helped me prepare these remarks

tonight, and I mean them in a

heartfelt way to say thank you.

For the last 25 years, the regime in

Iran has secretly and unlawfully commenced

the process of acquiring a nuclear

weapon. This is a grave threat to

peaceful and freedom-loving people

around the world. This is a regime

headed by a president who just recently

has said that one Holocaust was

not enough, that we need another one;

a regime headed by a president who

said that Israel should be wiped off the

face of the Earth; a regime that has

flagrantly and blatantly disregarded

international law in pursuing this

weapon of mass death.

I believe that it should be a policy

not only of our country but of freedomloving

nations around the world that

this regime in Iran must never have a

nuclear weapon that it could use

against its neighbors or other peaceloving

people around the world. It is

truly a grave threat. In my view,

Madam Speaker, it is a grave threat

that calls for diplomacy, strategy, and

cooperation, and not for a reckless

rush into armed conflict. That is the

purpose, Madam Speaker, of my remarks

here this evening.

I am troubled by recent signs that I

have seen from our administration

with respect to the issue of Iran. Placement

of naval assets in that area of the

world is justified as a defensive measure,

but I worry that it may be a provocative

measure. The words of our

President are words which can be

taken, and I hope they are meant in

the spirit of warning and cooperation,

but they could also be taken in the

spirit of provocation, and I hope and

pray that they are not meant in that

regard.

My principal message though this

evening is not one about answering the

question as to what we should do about

the threat of a nuclear weapon in Iran.

My principal message is to find who

the ‘‘we’’ in that sentence is, what

‘‘we’’ should do about the question of

nuclear proliferation in Iran.

The Constitution of this country

vests the sole authority to declare war

in the Congress of the United States of

America. Our Presidents as commanders

in chief have inherent authority

to protect our country in time of

emergency and to act in self-defense,

but it is a clear principle of this Constitution

that the power to initiate

hostilities, the power to declare war,

rests in this body and the other body.

I think it is imperative in the days

and weeks ahead that in whatever

forum, in whatever way, this House go

on record as reaffirming that constitutional

prerogative with specific reference

to the issue of what we should

do about Iran.

If there is to be consideration of military

action involving Iran, in my judgment,

such consideration would be

reckless and premature at this time

and under these facts. But if there is to

be consideration of military action, it

should be careful, deliberate, thoughtful

consideration done under the auspices

of this Constitution.

America’s greatest resource in the

area of national defense is the men and

women who step forward voluntarily to

serve this country and wear the uniform

of this country. They step forward

because of their faith that we are

a country that follows the rule of law,

and not the edict or desire of any one

man or woman irrespective of what office

he or she is elected to. It is my

concern that that faith would be eroded

and indeed misplaced if we do not

follow the rule of law in this crucial instance.

This House needs to affirm our constitutional

prerogative in this matter.

There should be no consideration of the

initiation of any preemptive hostilities

against Iran or anyone else without the

careful, thorough, constitutional consideration

that such a question mandates

and demands.