Mr. Speaker,

one of the biggest threats to peace

in the Middle East and possibly the

whole world is for the United States

and our friends and allies around the

world to stop Iran’s nuclear development

program. We have been working

for months and months to come up

with a very strong Iran sanctions bill.

The bill has finally passed the House

and Senate, and because of the differences,

we are in a conference committee.

We have a very strong bill, one

that will put extreme pressure on Iran

and possibly avert a war in the Middle

East. But now we are hearing that the

bill is going to be watered down. It is

going to be made weaker. If it is made

weaker, that means the pressure will

not be put on Iran that should be, and

they will continue with their nuclear

development program and we could be

in a war in the Middle East that will

far exceed what we have seen in Iraq

and Afghanistan.

I want to read to you from a report

that was issued just last week. ‘‘Iran

has set up new equipment that will

allow it to boost its efficiency at enriching

uranium at higher levels. Iran’s

clandestine enrichment activities were

discovered 8 years ago and have expanded

since to encompass thousands

of centrifuges churning out material

enriched to 3.5 percent. But despite

three sets of Security Council sanctions

meant to enforce demands of a

freeze, Tehran moved to a new level in

February, when it set up a small program

to produce material enriched to

near 20 percent.’’ And 20 percent can be

used for a nuclear weapon.

The story continued, ‘‘But the move

has increased concerns because it

brings the Islamic Republic closer to

the ability to produce warhead material.

Uranium at 3.5 percent can be

used to fuel reactors, which is Iran’s

avowed purpose for enrichment. If enriched

to around 95 percent, however, it

can be used in building a nuclear bomb.

And at 20 percent, uranium can be

turned into weapons-grade material

much more quickly than from lower

levels.

‘‘The 20-percent uranium is being

produced by ‘a cascade’—164 centrifuges

hooked up in series. The diplomats

said that Iranian technicians

had in recent weeks assembled another

164-centrifuge cascade, and the throw

of a switch appeared ready to activate

it to support the machines already

turning out small amounts of near 20-

percent uranium.’’

We don’t know how long it is going

to be before Iran has nuclear weapons,

but we know it is not going to be too

long. And every day we wait to put

pressure on Iran is a day they are closer

to developing nuclear technology

that could start a war over there, obliterate

our friends in Israel, and cause a

major war that we will have to be involved

with.

We get about 40 percent of our energy

from the Middle East. And if a war

breaks out over there and in the Gulf

States, the Persian Gulf could be

blocked, and we would lose so much energy

we wouldn’t even be able to run

the lights in this place.

It is extremely important that we

have a very strong Iran sanctions bill.

I am on the conference committee, and

I would say to my colleagues who are

conferees, let’s make it tough, as tough

as possible, because the one thing we

want to do is avert a major war with

Iran in the Middle East. And I can tell

you, I know Bibi Netanyahu, the prime

minister of Israel, is not going to stand

by and watch a weapon that could obliterate,

destroy Israel, be produced

right next door there in Iran. So it is

important that the United States take

the lead by coming up with a very

strong bill that will put sanctions on

Iran that they will realize will stop

them economically if they don’t stop

their nuclear development program.

This is probably going to be one of

the last chances we will have to stop a

nuclear program in Iran that will develop

a nuclear weapon and possibly

cause a major war and proliferation of

nuclear weapons throughout the Middle

East. This is a very important time

not only for them, in the Middle East,

Israel and our allies, but it is a big, important

time for the United States and

all of our allies in Europe. We can’t let

a terrorist state like Iran get a nuclear

weapon, and that is why we need to

pass a very strong Iran sanctions bill,

and we need to do it right away.