Madam Speaker, last

week we got the troubling news that

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez was

joining Russia and Nicaragua in recognizing

the Abkhazia and South Ossetia

territories of Georgia as independent

countries. This is very troubling. The

international community recognizes

the territorial integrity of Georgia,

and now we have to wonder, with

Chavez’s move, what other countries

might join him in this effort.

It is absolutely essential that we

stand with our ally, Georgia, in doing

everything that we can to strengthen

democracy, the rule of law, and the institutions

that exist there.

Senator KERRY and I have joined in

introducing a resolution calling for the

establishment of a U.S.-Georgia free

trade agreement. The actions of Chavez

make that even more important today

than ever. We need to do all that we

can to help strengthen and bolster our

economy and their economy as well.

Let’s pass this resolution and ensure

that the free people of Georgia are able

to succeed.