Mr. Speaker, I move to

suspend the rules and pass the bill

(H.R. 4655) to establish a program to

support a transition to democracy in

Iraq, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

Mr. Speaker, I ask

unanimous consent that all Members

may have 5 legislative days within

which to revise and extend their remarks

on this measure.

Mr. Speaker, I yield

myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I introduced

H.R. 4655, the Iraq Liberation

Act of 1998, in late September in order

to give our President additional tools

with which to confront the continuing

threat to international peace and security

posed by Saddam Hussein.

For almost 8 years, since the end of

Operation Desert Storm, we have waited

for Saddam Hussein’s regime to live

up to its international obligations.

After dozens of U.N. Security Council

resolutions and compromise after compromise,

we have too little to show.

The dilemma of current U.S. policy is

dramatically illustrated by the events

we have witnessed this past year. In

January and February, our Nation was

on the verge of launching massive military

strikes against Iraq in order to

compel Saddam to afford U.N. weapons

inspectors access to certain sites that

he had declared off-limits. Our Nation

stood down after U.N. Secretary-General

Kofi Anan brokered a deal in

which Saddam promised to behave better

in the future. But, our leaders said,

if Saddam violates his agreement with

Kofi Anan, we will retaliate swiftly and

massively.

After spending over $1 billion to build

up U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf earlier

this year, those additional forces

were slowly drawn down and brought

home. And then, of course, Saddam

reneged on his commitments once

again.

Today is the 61st day without U.N.

weapons inspections in Iraq. The situation

as regards weapons inspections is

far worse today than it was back in

January and February when our Nation

was threatening military action.

One of the reasons our Nation did not

undertake military action in February,

and one of the reasons our leaders are

not today delivering on their threats of

swift and massive retaliation, is that

the kind of military action they have

in mind just might not work. Certainly

we can inflict massive damage on Saddam

with air strikes. But what if he

simply absorbs the damage and continues

to defy the U.N.?

As things stand today, we would have

only three alternatives in such a situation.

First, we could forge ahead with

our air strikes, bouncing the rubble in

Baghdad, but increasingly making it

appear to the world that we are the aggressor,

not Saddam. Second, we could

mount a second invasion of Iraq by

U.S. ground forces. Or, third, we could

admit failure and give up.

Of course, none of these alternatives

have been considered acceptable. And

so today we find our Nation paralyzed

by indecision. Saddam has never before

been in such clear violation of his

international obligations. Our government

has never before been so obviously

unwilling to do anything about

it.

The purpose of the Iraq Liberation

Act is to try to break this logjam. It

creates a fourth alternative, an alternative

that meets both our short-term

and our longer-term requirements with

regard to Iraq. In the short term, we

need to be able to bring more effective

pressure to bear on Saddam in order to

force him to comply with his international

obligations. In the longer

term, we need to remove his regime

from power.

Let there be no mistake about it.

Saddam is the problem, and there will

be no permanent solution as long as his

regime remains. The Iraq Liberation

Act gives the President tools that he

should find useful in designing a comprehensive

strategy to deal with Saddam

both in the short term and over

the longer term. The legislation does

not require the President to equip a

rebel army in Iraq, but it gives him all

the authority he needs to do so. If he

uses that authority, it will cost money,

perhaps as much as $99 million that the

bill authorizes, perhaps ultimately

more, but whatever the cost, it will be

far less than the $1.4 billion supplemental

appropriation we provided this

year alone for unbudgeted U.S. military

operations against Saddam Hussein.

Since this bill was introduced, Mr.

Speaker, we have been working with

the administration to try to refine it in

order to make it most useful to the

President. At their suggestion we have

incorporated a number of changes at

our committee markup last week to

improve the legislation, and as a result

of our work with the administration I

have been informed the administration

does not oppose enactment of the bill.

With regard to one technical matter,

I note that the criterion in Section 5

(c)(1) for designation of Iraqi opposition

organizations is intended to ensure

that only broad based organizations

are designated. They may be

broad based by having a broad spectrum

of groups cooperating within one

organization. In the case of organizations

composed primarily of one ethnic

sector such organizations may also be

designated if they include a broad spectrum

of individuals within the sector.

In any event, I would expect the designation

issue to be the subject of dialogue

and accommodation between the

Executive Branch and Congress as required

by the notification provision

contained in section 5(d).

Mr. Speaker, this bill will give our

government additional tools with

which to confront the threat to international

peace and security posed by

Saddam Hussein, and for this reason I

believe it deserves the support of our

Members. Accordingly, I urge our colleagues

to vote in favor of H.R. 4655.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of

my time.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 8

minutes to the gentleman from Indiana

(Mr. HAMILTON), and I ask unanimous

consent that he be permitted to control

this time.

Mr. Speaker, I am

pleased to yield 5 minutes to the gentleman

from California (Mr. ROHRABACHER)

a member of our committee.

Mr. Speaker, I yield

such time as he may consume to the

gentleman from Indiana (Mr. HAMILTON).

Mr. Speaker, I yield

myself such time as I may consume.

In closing this debate I want to respond

to a few of the points that have

been made by other speakers. First, the

bill does not make an open-ended financial

commitment. It does not authorize

an unlimited expenditure of

funds; it authorizes such sums as may

be necessary, subject to a cap of $97

million.

On the contrary, the purpose of the

bill is to save money. We had to pass a

$1.4 billion supplemental appropriation

earlier this year to pay for U.S. military

deployments to confront Saddam

Hussein. We are going to have to spend

that kind of money over and over

again, unless we try something new,

because today Saddam is far from complying

with his international commitments

than he was 9 months ago.

Second, this bill does not force the

President to do anything that he might

deem unwise. Rather, it gives him additional

options for defending our national

interests in the Persian Gulf region.

Accordingly, I urge support for

this measure and I urge my colleagues

to vote ‘‘yes’’ on H.R. 4655.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance

of my time.