Madam Speaker, I appreciate

my friend from Washington State

for yielding to me.

I just wanted to commend the gentleman

for having this discussion this

evening. I think it is perhaps the most

important decision that the President

is about to make on behalf of our Nation,

and it is a decision that is going

to affect our relationship with the

Arab world and the rest of the international

community for decades to

come. But one of my concerns is for the

past several months Congress has been

AWOL on this issue, absent without

leave. And I think there is still time

for us to engage on this fundamentally

important decision, and that is what

will be the future course of events in

dealing with Saddam Hussein and Iraq.

And somehow, some way I think we

need to come to grips with the new reality

of the international order, and

that is there are some bad people out

there that pose security threats

against the safety of our citizens, but

it is imperative that we figure out a

way of distinguishing between those individuals

who are deterable and those

who are undeterable.

Certainly I would put Osama bin

Laden, the al Qaeda regime in the

undeterable category. Those are the

ones we need to focus on, we need to

get after in order to enhance the security

of our people in this country.

I think there is still a debate going

on in regards to Saddam Hussein and

whether he, in fact, can be deterred.

But what is most disconcerting in all

this is that we have lost a lot of good

will in the international community.

The international coalition of support

that the President said he would work

hard to try to achieve last fall has not

come together and we are dealing with

a different set of circumstances in an

entirely different context today than

when the first Iraq resolution came up

last fall: The security threat that

North Korea now poses against us,

which I think is still the most imminent

threat against our Nation’s security

today, even more than Saddam

Hussein.

The fact that we do not have this coalition

of support to do it the right

way, not the military operation which

we can pretty well do on our own but

the rebuilding afterwards. I am afraid

we could win the war but lose the

peace. And that is why international

support is so crucial. But also the domestic

implication. The President a

couple weeks ago submitted a budget

calling for the largest deficit in our Nation’s

history, and it does not include a

dime for the cost of the military buildup

in the Middle East or the possible

military action or the rebuilding that

will have to come afterwards. These

are issues that all of us in this Congress

should been engaged in in having

a national discussion, however unpleasant

that might be. That is what a great

democracy needs to do.

And that is why I earlier this week

called on the gentleman from Illinois

(Mr. HASTERT) and Majority Leader

FRIST to allow the United States to

have a renewed discussion, to give our

constituents back home an opportunity

through their representatives to voice

their opinions and their concerns in regard

to this very important decision.

And that is why, again, I want to just

thank my friend from Washington

State (Mr. INSLEE) for trying to have a

dialogue on this very important issue,

because a lot of folks back home feel

that they are wondering where Congress

is in all of this. And instead of

having these meaningful discussions,

we are instead discussing about changing

French fries to freedom fries. I

mean, how trivial can you get?

So as we move forward, and I still

think there is time to engage the country

but also the international community

in regard to this important decision,

hopefully we will have more of an

opportunity for Congress to get back

involved in this and get the policy

right. And regardless of what decision

the President makes, and if it is a decision

to send the troops in, I would hope

at a minimum there would be consensus

in the country that we need to

support our troops.

I have been to a lot of deployment

ceremonies for Guard and Reserve

units in Wisconsin, and I had a chance

to meet a lot of those who are being

called up today, and let me tell you

they are impressive individuals. Welltrained,

well-motivated, very patriotic.

They love and believe in their country,

and we need to give them support in

their mission. But it is our task as policymakers

to make sure we get the policy

right, and there is where the conversation

should take place, and there

is why we need to have these type of

discussions.

So I thank my friend again for the

opportunity to speak on this important

issue, for the leadership he has shown

on this important issue. And hopefully

we will be able to work and engage together

on this. That it is not just one

individual here in this country making

such a profound decision that will affect

our position on the global scene

for many years to come.