Mr.

Speaker, I thank the distinguished

Speaker, and I am delighted to be able

to join the chairman of the Congressional

Black Caucus and my colleagues

in following up on this outstanding

Special Order that the gentleman from

Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) has led and

to thank him. I do not think we appropriately

thanked him as the time has

run out for his wisdom and insight in

bringing us together this evening.

This is a very trying time for the

chairman in his leadership role and for

this Congress, and for him to have the

courage to be able to stand up on the

floor of the House and convene his colleagues,

knowing of the name-calling

that is going on in this country, but I

think as I have spoken to the gentleman

from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS)

earlier, he has admitted that he is willing

to risk affection and admiration to

be able to tell the truth and to speak

on behalf of the Nation’s constituents

who are concerned about the direction

this Nation has taken and certainly

the choices that we are making, choosing

war over peace, and actually not

choosing life over death.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to say that I rise

this evening to really speak to the

deafening silence that we have seen occurring

in the realm or in the august

halls of this particular body, and that

is that we have come now to almost

the brink of a decision; I will not say

the brink of war, I am going to say the

brink of a possible decision and yet,

this Congress, the 108th Congress, Mr.

Speaker, has not taken up the question

of a declaration of war. The silence is

enormously deafening, I say to my colleagues,

for this reason.

The Constitution is clear when it

enunciates the powers of this Congress

in article I, section 8, along with the

duties of imposing and exercising taxes

and paying debts and providing for the

common defense and general welfare. It

announces clearly to declare war and

make rules concerning captures on

land and water. Somewhat antiquated

language, but it is very clear, Mr.

Speaker, that this body has a duty and

obligation to declare war. The President

is the Commander in Chief, and

we fully respect and understand that.

And as he is the Commander in Chief,

he can deploy troops.

Yes, the Congress entered into, or

this Nation entered into, the Korean

conflict, the Vietnam police action;

but because Congress fails to act, it

does not abdicate its duty and its responsibility.

The one thing America

needs to understand is that there is no

doubt or any question that if we were

under imminent attack, it is clear that

the Commander in Chief could defend,

along with the armed services, the

United States military, this Nation. In

fact, the war powers resolution clearly

enunciated that perspective by statute,

that if any President felt we were

under imminent attack, as was indicated

to us in October of 2002, that

President could engage in the protection

of this Nation and report back to

the Congress.

Sadly, and maybe graciously, Mr.

Speaker, we are not under imminent

attack. We were not under imminent

attack in the October 2002 debate and,

in fact, I would say that our colleagues,

our friends, Members of this

body and the other body, deserve to redebate

this question because, Mr.

Speaker, we did not know of the dire

circumstances of North Korea. We did

not know of its unclassified now state

or status, of its ability or potential of,

if you will, creating and having nuclear

weapons. So now we have our war missiles

and our troops focused on Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, I would say to my colleagues

that this is the time for this

Nation to see this democratic body debate

the question of war, up or down,

should we declare war against Iraq. We

will not harm our troops. We have all

stood here and said that we do not divide

on our troops. There is no divide.

The mission is in question. But we will

lay down our lives for our troops as

they are ready to lay down their lives

for this Nation.

Why castigate those of us who allegedly

are accused of being unpatriotic

when everyone knows that the armed

services comes from all of our respective

districts?

So, Mr. Speaker, I think it is important

this evening as the time seems to

be shortened, I believe it is important

to look for, Mr. Speaker, an alternative.

There is another way. And I demand,

if you will, that this House debate

the question that we indict Saddam

Hussein, that we leave 50,000

troops and bring the others home, that

we seek to put in humanitarian aid, we

fight for the Mideast peace, and we

fight the war against terrorism; but we

find an alternative, because it is better

to choose life over death and peace

over war.