Madam Speaker, debates

of this nature, I think, are wholly constructive

in the life of the Nation. I

rise today not just to support the Iran

Freedom Support Act, but to engage in

a thoughtful debate.

I commend my colleagues, 360 of

whom have cosponsored this legislation

brought forward by the admirable Representative

ROS-LEHTINEN of Florida

and supported strongly by the International

Relations Committee. But I

also speak with admiration on behalf of

my colleagues who are here debating

and opposing this measure. In fact, the

gentleman from Oregon just made

some eloquent comments in which he

called, and I paraphrase, with respect

for strong, smart, diplomatic efforts.

And while we may disagree on the

meaning of those words, I would borrow

them, Madam Speaker, to say that

I believe that is precisely what the Iran

Freedom Support Act is. It is strong, it

is smart, and it is a diplomatic measure

expressed by the Congress, the will

of the American people, into a circumstance

that is real, that is meaningful,

and for which the clarity of the

position of the United States of America

is essential at this moment.

Let me speak for just a second about

the Iran Freedom Support Act, which

does just a couple of things that are

worth restating, and then I want to

talk about the nature of this confrontation.

This legislation attempts to deny the

Iranian regime critical technical and

financial resources to pursue unconventional

weapons, incite terror and

oppress the Iranian people. It is important

to note that H.R. 282 does not authorize

the use of force against Iran,

despite the tone and tenor of some of

the debate today.

Specifically this bill requires that

WMD-related U.S. sanction controls

and regulations on Iraq remain in effect

until Iran has verifiably dismantled

its WMD program. It also authorizes

the President to provide democracy

assistance to foreign and domestic

individuals and organizations promoting

freedom within that country,

and engages in a host of additional economic

measures and sanctions, including

amending the Iran-Libyan Sanctions

Act to recognize the historic

gains that Ranking Member LANTOS referred

to in relation to our relationship

with Libya.

Now, that being said, I just want to

talk as a Hoosier from the Midwest

about the real stakes here, and about

the nature of the present leadership in

Iran, and the importance of us to speak

as the one people and as one Nation

forcefully into this diplomatic engagement.

Listen to some of the quotes of the

leadership of Iran today. President

Ahmadinejad said in September of last

year, ‘‘Iran is ready to transfer nuclear

know-how to the Islamic countries due

to their need.’’

We are not just dealing with nuclear

proliferation within a country that has

a long and profound history of association

with terrorism, but one that desires

to export nuclear technologies.

President Ahmadinejad said in October

of last year, ‘‘God willing, with the

force of God behind it, we shall soon

experience a world without the United

States and without Zionism.’’ And it

was not long ago that he said that Iran

would inflict both ‘‘harm and pain on

the United States.’’

And his threats against Israel in particular

should be deeply offensive to

every freedom-loving person in the

world, and every American who cherishes

our relationship with our ally,

Israel. President Ahmadinejad said in

October of last year, ‘‘As the Imam

said, Israel must be wiped off the

map.’’ And the President of Iran also

said, ‘‘Anyone who recognizes Israel

will burn in the fire of the Islamic Nations’

fury.’’

This is real, Madam Speaker. This is

a confrontation that I pray we will be

able to resolve with strong, smart, diplomatic

efforts. But if the United

States fails to act with clarity, including

adopting the Iran Freedom Support

Act, the potential consequences of inaction

could be catastrophic.

I urge my colleagues to join the 360

Members, Republicans and Democrats

alike, who have supported this legislation

when it comes to the floor later

today.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance

of my time.

Madam Speaker, I yield

myself such time as I may consume.

There have been repeated assertions

by several of my colleagues today

about the administration’s position on

the bill we are considering today. In

fact, it has been characterized repeatedly

by several colleagues that the administration

‘‘strongly opposes’’ this

legislation.

With great respect to my colleagues,

they are referring specifically to an administration

letter that expressed an

opinion to the chairman of the Committee

on International Relations before

the bill provided further flexibility

to the President, and it is not a response

to the text of the bill we are

considering today. The administration

has not taken a position on the legislation,

as amended, that we are considering

today.

In specific reference to the concerns

that were addressed, I would like to address

title II of the legislation before I

recognize the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

Title II of the bill was the focus of

the administration’s letter, and it had

to do in particular with that section

concerning the ability of the President

of the United States to waive certain

provisions of this act in the national

interest. The legislation that we consider

today states that the President

may on a case-by-case basis waive for a

period of not more than 6 months with

respect to national security the certifications

required in this bill if such a

waiver is ‘‘vital to the national security

interests of the country’’ and the

country of the national has undertaken

substantial measures to prevent the acquisition

and development of weapons

of mass destruction.

What we in effect did here is we lowered

the threshold significantly for the

President’s waiver in this case. It is

significant that the administration has

not expressed opposition to the legislation,

as amended. For the sake of clarity

of the record, I wanted to add that

to our debate today.

Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to

the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr.

WELDON), the distinguished vice chairman

of the Armed Services Committee.

I thank the gentleman

from New York for yielding and for his

strong leadership on the international

stage today and at other times in his

career.

To the gentlewoman from Florida

who is in our thoughts and prayers

today, ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, who authored

the Iran Freedom Support Act,

I express gratitude.

Mr. CROWLEY of New York just said it

best. The bill we will consider today

codifies U.S. sanctions on Iran and requires

that they remain in place until

Iran has verifiably dismantled its

chemical, biological and nuclear weapons

program. It does not, this legislation

today does not authorize the use

of force against Iran. It does a host of

other things that represent economic

sanctions. It supports independent

human rights and peaceful prodemocracy

forces within Iran.

But the Iran Freedom Support Act is

the right bill at the right time. It is a

strong diplomatic measure. The potential

consequences of inaction could be

catastrophic. Congress and this administration

must act before it is too late,

before our options are severely limited,

and this diplomatic measure today, the

Iran Freedom Support Act, is such a

measure.

I ask my colleagues to render their

overwhelming support of this

legislation.