Mr. Speaker,

while much of the attention here in

Congress is focused on the difficulties

here at home, as we have heard in

speeches this evening, rising unemployment

rates, home mortgage foreclosures,

increasing health care costs,

stock market decline, I rise tonight to

remind us that we cannot forget about

the pressing challenges to global stability

and our national security interest

posed by Iran.

One of the best ways to understand

the seriousness of the Iranian threat is

to listen to the words of its leaders.

Iran’s President has called the Holocaust

a lie, has said that Israel ‘‘must

be wiped off the map’’ and frequently

speaks about a future world in which

‘‘Israelis will be eradicated’’ and Israel

no longer exists. Iran’s supreme leader

joined in this hateful refrain recently

when he called Israel a cancerous

tumor.

The hatred of Iran’s leaders is not

just directed at Israel. Ahmadinejad

has called American objectives and influence

‘‘Satanic’’ and has spoken before

crowds that chant ‘‘death to

America.’’ Such aggressive and intolerable

words are not just simply rhetoric.

They represent the policies of a government

committed to terror and destruction.

Iran is the world’s leading state sponsor

of terrorism and is pursuing a nuclear

program in defiance of three

United Nations Security Council resolutions.

Iran’s support for terrorist

groups Hezbollah and Hamas have enabled

these organizations to carry out

attacks on Israel and kill innocent civilians.

With training and other assistance

from Iran, Hamas increased the

range of its rockets so now 1 million

Israelis are within the scope of attack.

Iran’s pursuit of nuclear weapons

threatens Israel, other nations in the

region and our U.S. national security.

No government that calls for the complete

destruction of another nation

should be allowed to have nuclear

weapons. Yet Iran continues to move

closer and closer to being capable of

constructing such a weapon.

Although Iran reportedly does not

currently have a sufficient amount of

highly-enriched uranium to build a nuclear

weapon, Iran does possess enough

low-enriched uranium that can be converted

into material needed to create

an atomic bomb. Using existing centrifuges,

Iran could enrich its low-level

uranium to that of weapons grade in

several months.

Time is not on our side. The Obama

administration must back engagement

with tougher sanctions and guard

against Iranian diversions and delays.

Appropriate economic, political, and

diplomatic means are the best tools we

have to prevent Iran from developing

nuclear weapons.

Last year I cosponsored legislation

that declared it was in the national interests

of the U.S. to prevent Iran from

acquiring nuclear weapons and urged

the President to impose tough sanctions

on Iran, specifically its banks engaged

in proliferation activities and

companies doing business with Iran’s

Islamic Revolutionary Guard.

I also voted in favor of legislation

that expanded the types of entities in

Iran that are subject to sanction and

allowed state and local governments

and individuals to divest in any company

that invests in Iran’s energy sectors.

America’s efforts must go further. I

support sanctioning Iran’s Central

bank and foreign banks that conduct

transactions with sanctioned Iranian

entities. Efforts to prohibit the export

to Iran of refined petroleum products

should be pursued.

Israel is one of America’s closest allies

and plays a central role in the

peace and security of the most volatile

region of the world. We must continue

to demonstrate our support for our

Israeli friends in the face of continued

defiance and threats.

A nuclear-armed Iran is unacceptable.

I urge my colleagues in Congress

and the Obama administration to act

with the urgency this situation demands

and devote the necessary attention

to this serious threat. While there

are problems at home that require our

attention, we must not waiver in our

efforts to prevent Iran from acquiring

nuclear weapons.