Mr. Speaker, I yield

myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to

H.R. 3743. I do so with some reluctance

because of my admiration for the sponsor

of this bill, the gentleman from

New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ), his very

strong contributions over a period of

time to the work of the Committee on

International Relations, and his leadership

on a variety of issues before this

body.

I recognize the strong popular support

for this bill, but I rise in opposition,

because I really am not able to

point to anything very positive about

the bill that it will accomplish.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is not going to

stop, it is not going to slow Iran’s civilian

nuclear power reactor program. It

will not make Iran’s nuclear facilities

any safer. It will not prevent the troublesome

Bushehr facility from being

developed, and it will not bring any

greater international consensus on

curbing Iranian actions on the weapons

of mass destruction programs which

trouble all of us.

I do see several down sides to this

bill. It will, I think, politicize and polarize

the IAEA at the very time that

the United States has fought off attempts

in the IAEA to politicize technical

assistance to Israel. It will be

seen in the IAEA as an effort to punish

Iran, just at the time that Iran has

agreed to new anytime, anywhere,

IAEA safeguards and inspections.

The bill will make it more difficult

for the United States to get information

about Iran’s nuclear program. It

will make Iran’s nuclear program less

safe if the IAEA is forced to curtail its

safety and regulatory assistance.

It will make it more difficult for the

United States to convince other countries

to contribute to the IAEA technical

assistance and cooperation fund,

and it will make it more difficult to

convince other countries of the merits

of IAEA safeguards when the United

States is trying to block safety and

regulatory assistance to a country that

is party to the nonproliferation treaty.

I think the bill directly harms the

U.S. role in the IAEA. We are the single

most influential member of the

IAEA. We must remain the most influential

member. When we introduce political

issues into the IAEA, we undercut

our own efforts to keep this institution

focused on its technical responsibilities.

The IAEA has a critical mission to

promote international peace, security,

and safety. We rely on the IAEA to promote

and improve nuclear safeguards,

to expand the number of countries and

activities subject to safeguard controls

and inspections, to halt illicit trafficking

in nuclear materials, to support the

negotiation of international treaties on

nuclear power safety and radioactive

waste management, to provide technical

assistance to developing countries

on nuclear safety and handling

nuclear waste, and to address problems

that know no boundaries, such as environmental

pollution and eradication of

insect pests that can affect U.S. agriculture.

This international agency,

then, serves very important U.S. interests.

In a few minutes we will complete

consideration of a joint resolution on

Iraq. The IAEA, as everyone here

knows, plays a very key role in investigating

Iraq’s nuclear program. This is

the wrong time to undermine the

IAEA’s authority or U.S. support for

that agency. By reducing U.S. support

for this agency and by undermining

U.S. leadership in it, the bill will make

the IAEA less effective in meeting its

responsibilities for international safety

and security.

The chief argument put forward by

the proponents of the bill is that it

sends a message to Iran. We have sent

a message to Iran a thousand times, for

the past 20 years. There is not any

doubt about that message. Everyone in

the world knows what we do not like

about Iran’s policies.

This is a feel-good bill. We think we

are doing something about a problem

when in fact we are not. This bill will

have zero impact on whether Iran

builds a civilian nuclear reactor. It will

mean less information for us about

Iran’s nuclear programs, and the bill

hurts the one international organization

that works to stop the spread of

nuclear weapons.

Another argument put forward by

proponents of the bill is that the IAEA

should give no assistance whatever to

help Iran operate civilian nuclear

power reactors. When Iran builds those

reactors, it is in the interests of the

United States and in the interests of

the entire world that those civilian

power reactors operate safely. I do not

understand why we are better off if

Iran learns nuclear safety from the

same people who brought us Chernobyl.

Every Member of this body shares exactly

the same goals on Iran: stop terrorism,

stop weapons of mass destruction,

and stop Iran’s opposition to the

Middle East peace process. The problem

is that the U.S. policy is not working.

Twenty years of isolation have not

changed Iran’s objectionable policies.

We need a better policy to protect and

promote the American national interest.

We have to get beyond a policy of

just saying no to Iran.

There are forces in Iran today debating

that country’s future. That debate

is heated. We have a decided interest in

the outcome of that debate and the direction

Iran’s leaders choose. We certainly

cannot determine that outcome,

but our actions, our rhetoric, and our

legislation on Iran do matter.

Secretary Albright was exactly right

in her speech 6 weeks ago: The United

States should move, step-by-step, on a

reciprocal basis, to seek an improvement

in relations in Iran, and move toward

an authoritative dialogue. It will

not be an easy or quick journey to settle

the many differences we have with

Iran, but we should not ignore the largest

and most important state in the

Gulf region.

As part of that dialogue, I believe

that we should communicate to Iran

that we will not block Iran’s purchase

of nuclear power reactors for civilian

purposes, so long, of course, as all nuclear

facilities in Iran are under safeguards,

and as long as Iran responds to

all special inspections and requests for

information about its nuclear activities.

We should, of course, continue to oppose

any effort to strengthen Iran’s nuclear

weapons program. And if we

adopt the policy I have indicated, we

would then have the support of our

friends and allies, and we would have

an effective program to block Iran’s

nuclear weapons program. Today no

one can claim that we have an effective

policy or program.

The administration strongly opposes

this bill. I quote from the letter from

the Department of State:

‘‘We oppose H.R. 3743. . . . The Department

strongly objects to a bill requiring

that the U.S. withhold the portion

of our IAEA contribution used to

fund International Atomic Energy

Agency activities in Iran. Enactment

of this legislation would harm our bipartisan

effort to put a halt to any Iranian

nuclear weapons program.

‘‘Enactment of this legislation would

be counterproductive to the Administration’s

efforts to cut off nuclear

projects that might provide cover for

an Iranian nuclear weapons program.

The IAEA monitors commercial nuclear

projects to help ensure that such

projects do not benefit a covert nuclear

weapons program. The IAEA has not,

nor will it, provide support for construction

of nuclear power plants in

Iran or any other Nation. The IAEA

has been careful to design its technical

cooperation programs so that no assistance

in potentially sensitive areas occurs.

Recently Iran has agreed to new

IAEA ‘‘anytime, anywhere’’ verification

measures that will provide one of

our only windows on Iran’s commercial

nuclear programs. This bill would

therefore deny us this important nonproliferation

tool.’’

Mr. Speaker, the bill before us provides

no benefits to the United States.

It does pose several risks. We will only

succeed in stopping weapons programs

in Iran with the close cooperation and

support of our friends and allies. We

will not succeed in stopping that program

by acting unilaterally. We should

not waste our time on punishing the

IAEA and starting needless fights with

the very same countries whose support

we will need if we are going to have an

effective policy to stop Iran’s weapons

program.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the bill’s defeat,

and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I yield

myself the balance of my time.

Let me simply observe that the

whole purpose of this bill is to cut the

U.S. funding to the International

Atomic Energy Agency by an amount

equal to that agency’s funding of safety

projects. Of course it affects the

safety of that project. It is quite clear,

I think, by the terms of the legislation

that it does.

Finally, may I say that all of the arguments

the gentleman makes are premised

on the basis that the United

States is the only country in the world

that can furnish this technology. There

are dozens of countries that can furnish

it. Nuclear technology today is

not the province of the United States,

no matter what we do in this country.

The project is going to go forward

with the assistance of many other

countries. What we have today is a policy

that is not effective and has not

been effective for 20 years in stopping

the development of nuclear weapons

programs in Iran. Let us rethink the

problem.