Mr. Speaker, I am encouraged

by recent news that the administration

has offered to put an end to our

26-year-old policy of refusing to speak

with the Iranians. While this is a positive

move, I am still concerned about

the preconditions set by the administration

before it will agree to begin

talks.

Unfortunately, the main U.S. precondition

is that the Iranians abandon

their uranium enrichment program.

But this is exactly what the negotiations

are meant to discuss. How can a

meaningful dialogue take place when

one side demands that the other side

abandon its position before the talks

begin?

Is this offer designed to fail so as to

clear the way for military action while

being able to claim that diplomacy was

attempted? If the administration wishes

to avoid this perception, it would be

wiser to abandon preconditions and

simply agree to talk to Iran.

By demanding that Iran give up its

uranium enrichment program, the

United States is unilaterally changing

the terms of the Nuclear Nonproliferation

Treaty. We must remember that

Iran has never been found in violation

of the Nonproliferation Treaty. U.N.

inspectors have been in Iran for years,

and International Atomic Energy

Agency Director ElBaradei has repeatedly

reported that he can find no indication

of diversion of source or special

nuclear material to a military purpose.

As a signatory of the Nonproliferation

Treaty, Iran has, according to the

treaty, the ‘‘inalienable right to the

development, research and production

of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes

without discrimination.’’

Yet, the United States is demanding

that Iran give up that right even

though, after years of monitoring, Iran

has never been found to have diverted

nuclear material from peaceful to military

use.

As my colleagues are well aware, I

am strongly opposed to the United Nations

and our participation in that organization.

Every Congress I introduce

a bill to get us out of the U.N., but I

also recognize problems with our demanding

to have it both ways. On one

hand, we pretend to abide by the U.N.

and international laws, such as when

Congress cited the U.N. on numerous

occasions in its resolution authorizing

the President to initiate war against

Iraq. On the other hand, we feel free to

completely ignore the terms of treaties,

and even unilaterally demand a

change in the terms of the treaties

without hesitation. This leads to an increasing

perception around the world

that we are no longer an honest broker,

that we are not to be trusted. Is this

the message we want to send at this

critical time?

So some may argue that it does not

matter whether the U.S. operates

under double standards. We are the

lone superpower, and we can do as we

wish, they argue. But this is a problem

of the rule of law. Are we a Nation that

respects the rule of law? What example

does it set for the rest of the world, including

rising powers like China and

Russia, when we change the rules of

the game whenever we see it? Won’t

this come back to haunt us?

We need to remember that decisionmaking

power under Iran’s Government

is not entirely concentrated in

the President. We are all familiar with

the inflammatory rhetoric of President

Ahmadinejad, but there are others,

government bodies in Iran, that are

more moderate and eager for dialogue.

We have already spent hundreds of billions

of dollars on a war in the Middle

East. We cannot afford to continue on

the path of conflict over dialogue and

peaceful resolution. Unnecessarily

threatening Iran is not in the interest

of the United States and is not in the

interest of world peace.

I am worried about pre-conditions

that may well be designed to ensure

that the talks fail before they start.

Let us remember how high the stakes

are and urge the administration to

choose dialogue over military conflict.