Mr. Speaker, as

a cosponsor of H.R. 180, The Darfur Accountability

and Divestment Act, I am pleased to

see this bill brought before the full House and

I urge all our colleagues to vote for its final

passage.

The Darfur Accountability and Divestment

Act is an important part of our ongoing efforts

here in Congress to influence, pressure and

alter the conduct of the Sudanese regime, the

government complicit in the genocide being

perpetrated and abetted in Darfur. The deaths

of 450,000 innocent women, men and children

and the displacement of 2 million others demand

nothing less.

H.R. 180 comes amidst recent reports of

additional population displacements of about

12,000 households in West Darfur. Those who

are fleeing express fears of attacks by Sudanese

government forces in addition to general

insecurity in that area.

Despite the Sudanese government’s announcement

that it will accept a proposed hybrid

UN-African Union peacekeeping operation

in Darfur, it will take far more action on the

part of the Bashir regime to convince me—and

I am certain my other colleagues here in the

House as well—that it is finally succumbing to

the world’s outcry for peace. Withdrawing

American investments, both public and private,

from Sudan will help to ensure that we get

that government’s attention.

On August 1, 2005, my home State of New

Jersey became the first State to divest from

Sudan. Earlier that year, Representative DON

PAYNE and I had sent a joint letter to State

leaders encouraging this action. Our NJ law

directs the State Treasury to divest State pension

funds from foreign companies doing business

with Sudan until the Sudanese government

stops the genocide that is ravaging that

country. Eighteen other States have since followed

New Jersey’s lead and have adopted

divestment policies.

Mr. Speaker, as the Chairman of the Subcommittee

on Africa, Global Human Rights

and International Operations, I advocated

forcefully for divestment provisions in the

Darfur Peace and Accountability Act of 2006.

Unfortunately, the Senate removed those provisions

prior to final passage of the bill. I am

pleased that H.R. 180 revisits the divestiture

issue and builds on those initial efforts in several

important ways.

H.R. 180 requires that the Secretary of the

Treasury publish every six months a list of

companies that have a direct investment or

are conducting business operations in Sudan’s

power, mineral, oil or military equipment industries.

The bill excludes several important categories

of companies, including those that are

dealing directly with the government of southern

Sudan or that are helping the marginalized

populations.

Companies that are on the Treasury list will

not be able to enter into or renew contracts

with the United States Government. State and

local governments may also authorize prohibitions

for those governments to enter into or

renew contracts with these companies. The

bill further authorizes State and local governments

to divest based either on this list created

by the Treasury or on a list that they create

on their own, without risking a lawsuit by

doing so.

Perhaps most importantly, H.R. 180 provides

a safe harbor for mutual and pension

funds by allowing them to divest from companies

on the Treasury list without risk of a lawsuit

alleging that they are failing to invest in a

manner that brings about the highest yield. All

of these measures will provide the practical

and legal foundation for our country to do

what is in our national tradition—to place the

dignity of the human person and the wellbeing

of our brothers and sisters, regardless

of where they live or their national or ethnic

identity, above financial and commercial interests.

Promoting fundamental human rights and

removing financial support from those who

subsidize an abusive regime in Darfur is clearly

in the best interests of the Sudanese people

as well as our U.S. foreign policy. I urge my

colleagues to support The Darfur Accountability

and Divestment Act.