Mr. Speaker, among the duties of a Member of Congress,

there is nothing more serious than the issues of war and peace;

committing the wealth and the might of our Nation, putting the members

of our armed forces in harm's way. Before we went to war with Iraq, we

debated around the clock. Every Member of this body who so wished was

allowed to come to the floor and debate and discuss the issues of

conscience and war and peace.

Today promises a pathetic, pale and perverted version of that grand

debate. Four contradictory resolutions, 1 hour each. Vote on a

declaration of war, 13 seconds per Member of Congress, if it is equally

apportioned. Vote on immediate withdrawal, 13 seconds per Member.

Is the press of business on this body so heavy that we cannot

allocate more time, or are the leaders on the other side afraid of a

full and fair debate? Yesterday, the House adjourned at 4:30 in the

afternoon. Tonight, after exhausting ourselves in this debate, we will

leave at 7 p.m. What is more important to the other side, fund-raisers,

or issues of war and peace fully and fairly debated?

Fair debate? No amendments will be allowed from the floor of the

House of Representatives. And, we are only having this debate today

because of the War Powers Act and its expedited procedures. They have

to have a debate, although they are trying to pervert it in different

ways, but after today, no further votes will be allowed.

This is an outrageous abdication of our duties as Members of

Congress. Vote ``no'' on this rule.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding this

time to me.

We in Congress are in a position we should never be in. We are

confronted with a failed law, failed leadership and a military action

that failed to meet its initially stated objectives. Here we are,

finally having a belated and truncated debate because of the War Powers

Act, but a War Powers Act which is totally defective, and for 8 years I

have been introducing legislation to fix the War Powers Act. We need to

reclaim our constitutional authority and require prior authorization

before Presidents engage in wars or warlike activities using our armed

forces.

This is not unique to President Clinton. President Reagan, President

Bush went down the same path, as did Presidents before them and as they

will continue to do until this body has the guts to change the law and

require that not a penny be spent except in defense of our country

against immediate attack or armed forces overseas or as a citizen

without the authority of Congress in a war or warlike action.

We have a failed congressional leadership. They were engaged in duck-

and-cover and get everybody out of town before the bombing began. They

did not allow us to have a debate. Even with the defective law, we

could have had a vigorous debate here, and if we had that debate, I

believe we could have had a better policy.

Did not everybody know that it rained in that area at this time of

year? Did not our intelligence forces perhaps know that bombing and

removal of the OSCE observers would lead to increased, accelerated

ethnic cleansing and slaughter? And what if, what if Slobodan was not

going to come to the bargaining table after a few bombs fell? Those

questions were not asked by this Congress, and they were not answered

by this administration, and now we are in the midst of a failed policy.

I believe we need to go forward from here with productive ideas, but

this debate is not going to allow us to talk about productive ideas.

What about the idea of a temporary cease-fire, working with our allies

to try and force productive negotiations? What about having enough time

to talk about this issue? It is not allowed under this absurd rule.

Mr. Speaker, today I voted to require the President to

obtain congressional approval before deploying ground troops in the

Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). The framers of the Constitution

clearly intended that the power to initiate war, whether declared or

undeclared, should reside in the legislative branch of government. The

power to lead the nation without congressional authority into a costly

overseas military adventure is a power the Constitution explicitly

denies the President of the United States.

The Administration's policy in FRY is extremely short sighted and is

a clear example of why the Administration should have come to Congress

before committing U.S. troops to the NATO airstrikes. A congressional

debate would have forced the Administration to define every aspect of

NATO's Balkan policy. Congress should have been given the chance to ask

the tough questions that still linger after weeks of bombing. Instead,

NATO and the Administration are defining and defending their policy as

they go along. The result has been a tenuous military coalition with a

mission constantly questioned. This has emboldened Milosevic to

escalate his genocidal campaign and strengthened his power in Serbia. A

completely unified NATO force backed by a well-defined long term Balkan

policy before executing any military operations might have made

Milosevic a willing participant in peace negotiations.

The congressional leadership has presented Congress with a lot of bad

choices today as well. It is unfortunate that Congress is falling into

the trap that the Administration has set for it. Before the NATO

airstrikes began, the Clinton Administration wanted us to believe that

the only options available were to bomb or do nothing. Now Congress

wants us to believe that the only options are to continue the severely

flawed military operations or withdraw our troops and do nothing.

Unilateral withdrawal of U.S. forces from the military operations at

this time would cause the collapse of

NATO and be tantamount to a victory for Slobodan Milosevic.

While I support the efforts of my colleagues today to begin asserting

their Constitutional duty to authorize military actions, I question the

timing. Debating whether or not to withdraw our troops while they are

engaged in a military action, is extremely irresponsible. There is a

way to assert our Constitutional duty without undermining the safety of

our troops. I have introduced legislation for the last 8 years to

require Congress to authorize military actions before U.S. troops are

placed in hostilities.

The continuing religious and ethnic strife in the Balkans is unlikely

to be resolved by offensive military actions. Milosevic has more than

demonstrated his willingness to sacrifice the lives of his own people

to retain his power. There is another option. The U.S. and NATO should

call for a cease fire contingent upon a pull back of Serbian forces and

the beginning of real negotiations including Russia and the United

Nations. The Rambouillet agreements were fatally flawed and designed to

fail. It's time to go back to the drawing board and negotiate

enforceable peace between Milosevic and the Kosovar Albanians.