Mr. Speaker, since the beginning of this crisis, my

central concern has been the human rights situation in Kosovo. I

believe that we cannot simply look the other way during this disaster.

I believe that our policy must be directed toward saving as many

Kosovars as possible from death, rape, torture or other atrocities. To

that end, on March 24th, I issued a statement supporting NATO's

targeted air strikes against military targets. I supported targeted air

strikes in order to diminish President Slobodan Milosevic's ability to

wage war on more than a million of his own citizens. I believed it to

be the best of many bad options available to NATO after rejection of

the peace plan by Milosevic and more than a year of failed diplomatic

efforts.

Since the air strikes began, we have seen the focus of our bombing

shift from strictly military infrastructure targets to include the

civilian infrastructure. My support for the air strikes waned when this

shift began occurring, because our military actions were no longer

connected to my central goal of addressing the human rights crisis. In

fact, I believe that bombing the Yugoslavian civilian infrastructure

will worsen rather than improve the humanitarian situation.

I believe that Congress and the President must share in the

responsibility of deciding whether or not to introduce U.S. troops into

hostilities. The War Powers Resolution is unambiguous on that issue.

The U.S. House of Representatives has not yet taken such a vote. I

believe that we should.

Votes on war and peace are the most serious votes that a member of

Congress ever has to cast. In the end, votes of this magnitude must be

guided by conscience, not politics or party loyalty. For that reason I

am today casting votes in favor of H.R. 1569, prohibiting the use of

funds to deploy ground troops without Congressional authorization; in

favor of H. Con. Res. 82, invoking the war powers resolution and

withdrawing our troops in the absence of Congressional authorization

for their continuing presence; against H.J. Res. 44, declaring war on

Yugoslavia; and against S. Con. Res. 21, authorizing continued military

air operations against Yugoslavia.

What most concerns me about today's votes is that we are not

addressing our most important goals. I would like to be voting on a

resolution devoting as much time, energy, money and human resources to

assisting the refugees as we are to prosecuting this military action.

While we fight allegedly on their behalf, refugees remain in unsafe and

squalid conditions. There is much more we could be doing to assist

those whose lives we are fighting for. I would also like to be voting

on a resolution that says unequivocally to our troops--especially those

who are being held prisoner--I support and honor you in your work,

regardless of whether my vote is in the majority or minority today.

In the final analysis, our mission must be a moral one to relieve the

suffering of hundreds of thousands of displaced families and to seek

lasting peace in the region.