Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members, Republican and

Democratic, to vote against this resolution, and I urge you to do it

for three simple reasons: First, the language in this resolution is

unnecessary.

I was at a meeting a few minutes ago in the White House. Many of the

Members here were in the meeting as well. The President was asked, as I

have asked him many times, if as a practical matter he would change the

policy and ask for ground troops in this situation without a vote of

the Congress. And his unequivocal answer then and every time that I

have asked him this was that he would not. He would not as a practical

matter ask for an introduction of ground troops without coming here,

talking to us and allowing time for a vote.

As minority leader I believe strongly that if there is to be a change

in the policy by NATO or the United States and we should be seeking

ground troops, that it must be debated in the Congress and a vote must

be taken in the Congress. I do not know how I would vote. I would want

to hear what they have to say, why they want to do it, how it would be

done and what the feasibility of it would be.

So I would say to all Members in both parties, on both sides of the

aisle, you have my pledge that if there is a change in the policy, I

will be asking the Speaker to put on the floor an authorization, and we

will debate it and decide it and vote on it.

Secondly, I think this bill, if it passes, would be harmful to our

effort. I say that because you have got to think about who is going to

be listening to what we are saying.

Mr. Milosevic will be listening carefully to what we say here today.

Over the weekend he got a message of unity and resolve by 19 NATO

countries. He is probably having to think today, wow, maybe NATO really

means this; maybe they really are going to stay with this air campaign;

maybe they really do have their act together.

Do you really want to say to him today that we do not know what we

are doing, we probably will not be for ground troops? Do you want to

take that option off the table? I do not think so.

Third, and most important, is what the gentleman from Missouri (Mr.

Skelton) said: The language in this resolution is unclear, not as well

put as it could be, and it leaves in question what can be done in the

prosecution of the air war, which has been going on for 30 days.

There are lots of questions about people going across the border to

do this, that and the other thing in cooperation with the air war that

has nothing to do with the big ground force going over to try to

reclaim all or part of Kosovo that I do not think you want to get into.

I appreciate tremendously and respect the sentiment of the

gentlewoman and the gentleman that brought this resolution. I share

their view. I do not think there ought to be a ground war, unless we

vote on it and debate it. I totally share their view. But I, with all

respect, believe this is not the way to do it. I believe that will

happen if that is the decision of NATO.

I urge Members to vote against this so that we can send the right

message to Mr. Milosevic and to the American public and to the world. I

urge Members to vote no on this. Let us keep the right message out

there and stand behind our troops, that are out there every day trying

to do the right thing to get this done without a ground war.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask each Member to seriously

consider voting for this resolution. As I enter this debate, I think it

is worthwhile tonight at 7 o'clock here in Washington to take into

account the votes that we have taken and the messages that we have sent

from this Chamber this afternoon, today.

First, we have said that we do not want a general declaration of war

against Serbia. Second, we have said that we do not want to withdraw

all of our troops out of the region. Third, we have said that if there

is to be a ground war, we want the President to come back here and get

a vote from this body.

If we now vote against what the Senate passed 4 weeks ago in a

bipartisan way, a simple authorization of what is now happening on the

ground in Kosovo and around Kosovo, we will send a message to our young

men and women who are out there trying to carry out this policy that we

have conflicting signals on war or withdrawal or what we are going to

do about a ground war, but we send the clearest signal of the day that

we do not even want to authorize what we are doing.

It also will send a message to Mr. Milosevic and his leadership that

the House of Representatives of the United States of America is totally

confused and certainly is not behind what is happening. I do not think

that is the message we want to send. If we learned anything from

Vietnam, I think we should have learned that before we commit our

troops and put them in the field and leave them out there with

ambivalence, that we have to stand finally behind something.

I know there are lots of worries by Members here about ground troops.

I have worries about ground troops. I have not decided how I would vote

on ground troops. But I have decided that what we are doing with 19

other nations of NATO is the right thing for our country to do. If it

is to succeed, we must be unified together as a people, behind the

effort, and America must be unified with NATO in its first affirmative

action in 50 years, since it was conceived, to move forward to try to

end this killing and mayhem that is going on and has been going on for

weeks now in Kosovo.

I urge Members to put aside partisan feelings and political goals and

objectives. That can have no place in this consideration. There is not

a Republican Army or a Democratic Army or a Republican Air Force or a

Democratic Air Force. This is the United States of America. Our young

people, our best, are out there tonight doing what we have asked them

to do. At the very least, we owe them and NATO an affirmation that we

as the representatives of the American people at least support what is

happening now, without prejudging or saying what we would do about

other propositions that might come later.

I urge Members to support this resolution. The Senate passed it 4

weeks ago with a bipartisan vote. Fifty-seven Members of the Senate

voted for this resolution. I think it would be a grave error if we

would not support it tonight. I urge Members to search their

conscience, I urge Members to stand behind this policy for the sake of

the United States, for the sake of our young people, for the sake of

our future.