Mr. President, this act

recognizes the role that Syria continues

to play in promoting instability

and terrorism in the Middle East. Syria’s

support for terrorism, its occupation

of Lebanon and efforts toward the

development of weapons of mass destruction

threaten to hinder efforts to

encourage democracy, the rule of law

and a lasting peace in the region. As

such, this bill represents an effort by

Congress to express its outrage with

these actions and urge President Bush

to take the needed steps that will prod

Syria to halt these actions.

Syria has long been on the State Department’s

list of terrorist nations,

and is known to support numerous terrorist

organizations including

Hizballah, Hamas and the General

Command of the Popular Front for the

Liberation of Palestine. Just as importantly,

the presence of Syrian troops

thwarts the democratic aspirations of

the Lebanese people. The Taif accords

which mapped out a security program

for Lebanon included Syria’s commitment

to the ‘‘security independence

and unity of Lebanon’’ and its opposition

to any action that ‘‘threatens security

independence or [the] sovereignty’’

of Lebanon. The current Syrian

military presence in Lebanon and

its influence in domestic Lebanese politics

runs counter to these commitments.

This legislation seeks to address the

more pernicious elements of Syria’s

foreign policy, and I support that goal.

That being said, this legislation is not

perfect. I am concerned that this legislation

does not grant the President a

waiver that he might need ‘‘in the interest

of national security.’’ In addition,

some of the certification requirements

contained in the bill may need

to be revised. When this legislation

comes to the floor, I will offer an

amendment that addresses these concerns.

While Syria is a nation whose actions

are of grave concern to me, Syria supported

the Saudi Peace Initiative

which recognized the right of the State

of Israel to exist, and recently Syria’s

representative to the United Nation’s

Security Council voted in favor of

smart sanctions which will alleviate

the suffering of the Iraqi people while

hindering Saddam Hussein’s ability to

obtain the materiel needed to support

this efforts to obtain, develop and use

weapons of mass destruction.

These are useful steps but pale in significance

to the negative actions of

Syria that have earned it the dubious

distinction of being one of the world’s

rogue states.