Mr. President, I am an

original co-sponsor of H.R. 4655, the

Iraq Liberation Act, for one simple reason:

Saddam Hussein is a threat to the

United States and a threat to our

friends in the Middle East.

This lunatic is bent on building an

arsenal of weapons of mass destruction

with a demonstrable willingness to use

them. For nearly eight years the

United States has stood by and allowed

the U.N. weapons inspections process

to proceed in defanging Saddam. That

process is now in the final stages of

collapse, warning that the U.S. cannot

stand idly by hoping against hope that

everything will work itself out.

We have been told by Scott Ritter

and others that Saddam can reconstitute

his weapons of mass destruction

within months. The Washington Post

reported only last week that Iraq still

has three nuclear ‘‘implosion devices’’—

in other words, nuclear bombs

minus the necessary plutonium or uranium

to set them off. The time has

come to recognize that Saddam Hussein

the man is inextricable from Iraq’s

drive for weapons of mass destruction.

For as long as he and his regime are in

power, Iraq will remain a mortal

threat.

This bill will begin the long-overdue

process of ousting Saddam. It will not

send in U.S. troops or commit American

forces in any way. Rather, it harkens

back to the successes of the Reagan

doctrine, enlisting the very people who

are suffering most under Saddam’s

yoke to fight the battle against him.

The bill requires the President to

designate an Iraqi opposition group or

groups to receive military drawdown

assistance. The President need not

look far; the Iraqi National Congress

once flourished as an umbrella organization

for Kurds, Shi’ites and Sunni

Muslims. It should flourish again, but

it needs our help.

Mr. President, the people of Iraq,

through representative organizations

such as the INC, the Patriotic Union of

Kurdistan, the Kurdish Democratic

Party and the Shi’ite SCIRI, have

begged for our help. The day may yet

come when we are dragged back to

Baghdad; I believe that day can be put

off, perhaps even averted, by helping

the people of Iraq help themselves.

Opponents of this initiative—I

shouldn’t call them friends of Saddam—

have said that the Iraqi opposition

exists in name only, that they are

too parochial to come together. They

are not entirely wrong—which is why

Senator LOTT and Chairman GILMAN

(the lead House sponsor) have carefully

crafted the designation requirement in

H.R. 4655 to insist that only broadbased,

pro-democracy groups be selected

by the President to receive

drawdown assistance. I would go further,

and suggest to the President that

he designate just one group, the Iraqi

National Congress, in which the Kurds,

the Shi’ites and the Sunnis of Iraq hold

membership. The opposition must be

unified, but it may just take the leadership

of the United States to bring

them together.

Finally, this bill gives the Congress

oversight over the designation and

drawdown authorities. As Chairman of

the Foreign Relations Committee, I intend

to exercise vigorously that authority.

The White House and the

State Department have indicated that

they support this bill. We have a

unique opportunity, and I intend to do

everything in my power to ensure that

opportunity is not frittered away. The

price of failure is far too high.