Mr. President, I

wanted to come to the floor to express

my strong support for the Syria Accountability

Act. I commend the distinguished

chairman of the Senate Foreign

Relations Committee for his leadership

and the efforts he has made on

this legislation to bring us to this

point. Let me also thank my colleague

from California, Senator BOXER, for her

tireless and effective advocacy of this

legislation. I am very pleased this legislation

is now pending. I congratulate

my colleagues as well as others who

have made the effort to bring us to a

point where I believe on a strong bipartisan

basis this legislation will pass

this afternoon.

This day has been a long time coming.

We have heard administration officials

argue that this straightforward

response to the behavior of the Syrian

Government reduces the President’s

flexibility to deal with the ‘‘bigger picture.’’

We believe that it is not only

morally right, but will actually

strengthen the President’s hand in explaining

the ‘‘big picture’’ to the Syrians.

Had our years of entreaties to the

Syrians not fallen on deaf ears, and had

promises from Syria over the last several

years not turned out to be little

more than empty rhetoric, this bill

might not have been necessary.

However, it appears to many of us

that the point where we can continue

to sit back and hope for Syria to

change course has passed. The time has

come to show Syria that continued inaction

will no longer be tolerated and

will come at a price.

The behavior we seek from Syria is

not different than what we expect of

every other country in the world community—

an end to its support for terrorism,

and enforcement of its own

international agreements and United

Nations Security Council resolutions.

Syria simply has failed one too many

times to live up to these obligations,

and this legislation backs up our hopes

for Syrian compliance along with the

very real threat of sanctions.

The Syria Accountability Act holds

Syria accountable for its behavior by

imposing sanctions unless the Syrian

Government certifies that: It is no

longer providing support for terrorists

and terrorism; it has withdrawn all of

its military and intelligence personnel

from Lebanon; it has ceased its attempts

to produce, acquire, or transfer

weapons of mass destruction; and it

has ended its support for terrorists in

Iraq.

I am pleased with the bipartisan

process that produced this landmark

legislation, and I especially want to

commend Senator LEVIN for his leadership

in ensuring that the President

maintains the maximum flexibility to

wisely wield the tools created by H.R.

1828. The national security waiver,

which allows the President to waive

certain sanctions if they are deemed

counterproductive to U.S. security interests,

will allow our government to

effectively press for reform in Syria

without endangering our efforts in the

global war against terrorism.

There are three reasons we need to

pass this unambiguous statement of

U.S. intent.

First, as remarkable as it is to imagine,

the Government of Syria still provides

safe haven and material support

for some of the most objectionable terrorist

organizations in the world.

Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic

Jihad, PIJ, the Popular Front for the

Liberation of Palestine General Command,

the Popular Front for the Liberation

of Palestine, the Democratic

Front for the Liberation of Palestine,

the Abu Musa Organization, and the

Popular Struggle Front all maintain

offices in Damascus. Members of the

Syrian Government have, on occasion,

condoned suicide bombings against civilians

within Israel, calling them legitimate

military operations.

Syria alternates between defending

these offices in Damascus as solely for

press purposes, uninvolved in the conduct

of terrorist attacks, and promising

they will shut the offices down.

To date, its promises have amounted to

nothing. Meanwhile, its defense of

these offices is as unfortunate as it is

inaccurate. It is simply not acceptable

to provide support for an office whose

sole purpose is to call attention to, and

encourage support for, attacks on innocent

civilians.

Moreover, reports indicate that planning

for the recent and horrendous attack

at a restaurant frequented by

Israeli Jews and Israeli Arabs in Haifa

is connected to offices in Damascus.

We are also beginning to learn from

the intelligence community that Syria

may have allowed military equipment

and personnel to flow into Iraq on the

eve of and during the war, both of

which were used against our troops in

that country.

Although the administration reports

that the situation on the Syria-Iraq

border is ‘‘improving,’’ the international

community should expect

nothing but full cooperation from

Syria on something so basic as stopping

the flow of terrorists through its

territory.

Second, in signing the 1994 Taif Accords,

Syria pledged itself to the ‘‘security

and independence of Lebanon.’’ To

date, it has helped with neither. Instead,

it continues to support the Lebanese

Hezbollah and undermine the

democratic aspirations of the people of

Lebanon by occupying that country.

In 1999, Israel withdrew its forces

from southern Lebanon after being told

by the international community that

doing so would increase its security.

Cynically, Syria exploited the resulting

security vacuum and permitted attacks

on Israel from that region, all in

contravention of Security Council Resolution

425. It is especially disappointing

that we have to come to the

floor of the U.S. Senate to call on a

member of the United Nations Security

Council to enforce its own resolutions.

Third, the Syria Accountability

Act—a clear statement of America’s resolve—

should help put an end to the series

of mixed signals coming from the

Bush administration. Over the course

of the last 3 years, we have heard various

policies from the different spokespeople

for different agencies of the U.S.

Government. In fact, we have even

heard competing policies and concerns

from offices within the same State Department.

As I said at the beginning, I wish this

bill were not necessary. Unfortunately,

we all recognize that it has become

necessary. This bill will make clear to

Syria what we expect of it. If it is not

willing to end its support for terrorism

or uphold its agreements, it should not

be accepted as a full partner in the

international community.

I urge adoption of the legislation and

again congratulate the distinguished

chairman of the Foreign Relations

Committee for his leadership in bringing

this bill to the floor this afternoon.

I yield the floor.