Mr. President, I am

very pleased we are going to vote on

the Syria Accountability bill, a bill I

first introduced with Senator

SANTORUM in April of 2002. It has had a

very bumpy ride. I am glad the ride

will soon end smoothly; at least that is

my sense.

On April 18, 2002, with a list of 45 cosponsors,

I introduced this bill with

Senator SANTORUM.

On that day, I said:

With that, Senator SANTORUM and I

introduced the Syria Accountability

Act because we knew at that time—and

we know today—that by a variety of

means the Government of Syria is supporting

terrorist groups. It needs to

end.

In the 108th Congress, May 1, 2003,

now with a total of 81 cosponsors, we

introduced our bill again and at that

time we said:

The administration opposed our bill

very strongly. In fact, Secretary Powell

came before the Foreign Relations

Committee and when Senator LUGAR

and Senator BIDEN said to him, do you

support or oppose the Syria Accountability

Act, Secretary Powell said it

would not be helpful to pass it.

I did not agree with him then and I

do not agree with him now. When Secretary

Powell went to see the head of

Syria, what was one of the first things

he said to him? He said, you ought to

shape up because there is a bill in the

Senate, the Syria Accountability Act,

and those folks over there are serious.

It proved my point that, in fact, for

us to be tough on terrorism gives the

State Department the backup they

need. I think, frankly, it will be very

helpful for us to pass this bill today.

Now, the administration has moved

off their opposition and they are neutral

on this bill. They are neither for it

nor against it. The good news is, the

leaders of the Foreign Relations Committee,

finally I think, have decided

that maybe BOXER and SANTORUM have

been on the right track. So this is a

very big day for us because we have

gone through a pretty tough legislative

ride. We did not get hearings in the

committee. We could not move it.

In addition to Senator SANTORUM, my

original cosponsor of this, I do want to

thank Senator BYRD, who made suggestions

to perfect our bill, Senator

LUGAR who worked with Senator BYRD

and others, Senator BIDEN, who agreed

to let this come up in an expedited

fashion, and over on the House side

Representatives ELIOT ENGEL and

ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN helped us quite a

bit in moving this bill.

So it is, in fact, a day that is important.

What we are basically saying in

our bill is that if Syria does not shape

up they are going to face sanctions

from this Government. If Syria does

not stop supporting terrorism, if Syria

does not stop the development of weapons

of mass destruction, if Syria does

not end its occupation of Lebanon and

cease support for the terrorists operating

in Iraq, they are going to face a

series of escalating sanctions.

The fact is that we have 81 cosponsors—

and I see Senator SANTORUM on

the floor now. He worked his side of the

aisle, I have worked mine, and we were

able to really get these cosponsorships

up. On October 15, the House passed its

version of the bill 398 to 4. So I have to

say we are on to something.

Let me say from the bottom of my

heart what I think we are on to. We are

on to the premise that the truth shall

set you free. We cannot have relationships

with Syria and close our eyes to

the truth, and the truth is that Syria

is, in fact, supporting terrorism in

ways that are very clear. They are a

major supporter of Hezbollah, an international

terrorist organization that

has carried out numerous attacks

against Americans and Israeli civilian

targets. They have operated freely in

the Syrian-controlled Beqaa Valley in

Lebanon over the past 20 years. Other

terrorist groups such as Hamas, the

Popular Front for the Liberation of

Palestine, and the Popular Front for

the Liberation of Palestine-General

Command all maintain offices, training

camps, and other facilities inside Syria

or in areas of Lebanon under Syrian

control.

Anyone who has traveled to the region

knows that one of the saddest stories

in the world is the story of Lebanon

and how its people have lost any

control over their own destiny. As we

fight for democracy in the world, we

have to remember that. This was a

country at one point that was absolutely

considered the Paris in the Middle

East, and it has really been lost because

it has been taken over in a hostile

takeover, I might say, by the

power of Syria.

So all of these issues, getting Syria

to turn its back on terrorism and not

allow these organizations to operate

within their borders, Syria allowing

the Lebanese people to have a life of

freedom and democracy or at least self determination,

however they determine

it, these are issues that are crucial.

As long as they keep up the status

quo, the goal of Middle East peace is

quite elusive.

Twenty thousand Syrian troops and

security personnel continue to occupy

Lebanon and again, as I said, undermine

its political independence. It is a

direct violation of U.N. Security Council

Resolution 520. What does that say?

That resolution calls for strict respect

of the sovereignty, territorial integrity,

unity, and political independence

of Lebanon.

We also know that Syria is developing

weapons that are very dangerous,

and that they are not doing enough to

prevent terrorists from entering into

Iraq. In fact, the terrorist who was attempting

to blow up an Iraqi police

station was found to be carrying a Syrian

passport.

This has to stop. Nations must be

held accountable for the proliferation

of terrorism and they must be held accountable

if they are not doing all they

can to pursue Middle East peace or at

least allow that peace to take place.

So this legislation has taken a

bumpy road. When Senator SANTORUM

and I got together to work on it, people

said that is quite a combination. They

said if those two can get together on

anything, eventually we know we are

going to win.

It has taken us almost 2 years but we

could not be happier. We want to thank

the 80 other Senators who are cosponsors

of this bill. We, again, thank Senators

LUGAR and BIDEN for allowing

this bill to come directly to the floor

today. We think it is a historic day.

Our goal is to prevent war and to lay

out markers for Syria. We do not want

to go to war with Syria. We just want

to say, in a truthful way, these are the

things that you have been doing wrong.

Please meet these markers. Help us.

Help us in the world. If you don’t, we

are going to have some sanctions and

they are spelled out. I think others

have spelled them out. The idea behind

this bill is to avoid a confrontation and

instead have a relationship that is respectful

between our two nations. I

think today we will go a long way to

that end.

I believe all my time is used up at

this point so I will yield the floor and

I hope we will be voting shortly on

this.