Mr. President, I join the

chairman of the Foreign Relations

Committee in wishing a happy birthday

to Senator BOXER. I also thank

Senator BOXER and Senator SANTORUM

for their tenaciousness in advancing

this bill. It is long overdue and it is to

be celebrated by all of us.

Senator LUGAR, Senator BIDEN, and

the Foreign Relations Committee have

worked this bill into a condition where

we can bring it to the floor, giving the

President sufficient discretion, and

make clear that we will continue to engage

in diplomacy with the Syrians but

we are going to do it on a more realistic

basis, a basis that has consequences,

a basis that deals with

facts, not fantasy, and truly makes

progress in the Middle East.

It is a matter of historical record

that for a long time, several decades

now, the Syrians have occupied the nation

of Lebanon, their smaller neighbor

to their west. In the course of that,

whatever their motives were for going

in, they have stayed there for gain.

They have denied democracy to the

Lebanese people, they have denied

them self-determination, and they have

been responsible for keeping the breach

and the wound alive in Lebanon.

But as it relates to this bill, I also

have to take note of the fact it is Veterans

Day. We thank our veterans. We

celebrate our veterans. We owe them a

great debt.

As we think of yesterday’s veterans,

I am reminded of today’s veterans,

many of whom, from the State of Oregon,

are in Iraq now and who are in

harm’s way for the cause of American

liberty and the safety of the American

people and our allies in the ongoing

war on terrorism. The truth is, much

that is aimed at them today comes

from Syria. It comes from car bombers

holding Syrian passports. Indeed, just

the other day we learned the car bomb

that was interdicted and the person

pulled out of the car that was filled

with explosives was from Syria. Syria

maintains a porous border with Iraq

that simply cannot remain as it is because

if it does, it will mean the death

of more of our soldiers. We want them

home and we want them safe.

There is more than a porous border

that concerns me with Syria. It is the

fact that Syria provides a safe harbor,

indeed a safe haven, a heaven, if you

will, for terrorists. For those who conspire

to murder on a massive scale,

Syria gives them a place to stay, gives

them protection, and a place to hide

their money and their weapons before

they can bring them into conflict with

American soldiers. Who knows what

also may be there from the arsenals of

Saddam Hussein. Who knows what

weapons of mass destruction may even

be there as well.

All of this needs to end. Our President

needs to have the tools, the diplomatic

tools necessary to prosecute the

case with Syria in a way that gets us

beyond the status quo because the status

quo is unacceptable and the status

quo is deadly and the status quo has to

be over. I join with Republicans and

Democrats alike today in urging passage

of the Syria Accountability Act,

for the sake of our country, for the

sake of the Middle East, for the sake of

Muslims, for the sake of Jews, for the

sake of Christians, and all who have

suffered much.

The road to Damascus has brought so

much murder, so much conspiracy, so

much weaponry, so much blood money

that has been used against the peace

process and those who are the advocates

of a peaceful resolution in the

Middle East.

It is a matter of Scriptural record

that a man named Saul on the road to

Damascus once saw an awful lot of

light, changed his way, and even

changed his name. We know him today

as the Apostle Paul. What we need now

on the road to Damascus is a lot more

light because all we have been getting

is so much darkness. We need a new beginning

with Syria. The President

needs a new authority against Syria.

This bill is crafted in a way that is

helpful diplomatically so we can avoid

hostilities. But let us have the courage

in this war on terrorism to go where

the facts take us. Let us all pray it

does not take us down the road to Damascus,

but we have to be realistic.

This bill is a very good start. I urge

the Senate to adopt it today by a very

large margin.

I yield the floor.