Mr. President, I

rise today to express my support for

the Syria Accountability Act of 2003, a

bipartisan piece of legislation of which

I am proud to be a cosponsor.

The time has come for the Senate to

send a strong message to Syria that its

support for terrorism, its occupation of

Lebanon, and its development of weapons

of mass destruction are unacceptable

and will not be tolerated.

This legislation, introduced by my

friend and colleague from California,

Senator BOXER, and Senator SANTORUM

provides the President with maximum

flexibility to target specific sanctions

against Syria subject to a national security

waiver.

Specifically, it requires that sanctions

be imposed on Syria unless the

President certifies that Syria: is not

providing support for international terrorists;

has withdrawn all military, intelligence,

and other security personnel

from Lebanon; has ceased the

production, development, acquisition,

or transfer of weapons of mass destruction

and long range ballistic missiles,

and; has ceased support for terrorist

activities inside of Iraq.

If the President does not make such

a certification, the bill requires the

President to prohibit the export to

Syria of military items and dual use

technology and impose two or more

sanctions from a list of options including:

prohibiting the export of products

of the United States—other than food

and medicine—to Syria; prohibiting

United States businesses from investing

or operating in Syria; restricting

the travel of Syrian diplomats in Washington,

D.C. and New York; and reducing

diplomatic contacts with Syria.

I, for one, believe that sanctions

should be imposed only as a last resort

and that all avenues should be explored

to change another state’s behavior before

taking such action.

With regard to Syria, Congress has

passed numerous resolutions calling on

Syria to change its ways and Republican

and Democratic administrations

alike have made it clear that Syria’s

actions are wholly inconsistent with a

peace-loving and productive member of

the international community.

Nevertheless, words have not

achieved the results we are looking for

and as a result, we must take further

substantive action.

Syria’s behavior and actions leave a

lot to be desired and have severely hindered

the Arab-Israeli peace process.

First, it continues to be listed as a

state sponsor of terrorism by the State

Department and is reported by the Secretary

of State to provide ‘‘safe haven

and support to several terrorist

groups’’ including Hizballah, Hamas,

and the Popular Front for the Liberation

of Palestine.

Despite repeated calls by Secretary

of State Colin Powell that Syria cease

its support for terrorism and close the

facilities and offices of these groups, it

has refused to do so.

Second, for over 20 years Syria has

ignored United Nations Security Council

resolutions and has failed to withdraw

completely from Lebanon, maintaining

20,000 troops and security personnel

in that sovereign country. The

presence of those troops restricts the

political independence of Lebanon and

harms relations between Israel and

Lebanon.

Finally, Syria has continued its development

and deployment of short and

medium range ballistic missiles and biological

and chemical weapons. It has

not signed the Chemical Weapons Convention

and has one of the largest missile

inventories in the Middle East. It

is reported to have three production facilities

for chemical weapons and has a

stockpile of the nerve agent sarin.

In the post-September 11 world, we

all understand the dangers posed by

states who sponsor terror and seek

weapons of mass destruction.

I had hoped that Syria would realize

that it is in its best interests to turn a

new page in its relations with the

United States and the international

community and cease its support for

terror, withdraw from Lebanon, and

halt its pursuit of chemical and biological

weapons.

It has not done so and it is time for

the United States Senate to respond. I

urge my colleagues to support this legislation.