Mr. President, Syria has

long been considered by the United

States to be a rogue state. Syria continues

to associate with terrorist

groups, including those that have carried

out ruthless attacks that set back

the cause of peace in the Middle East,

leading it to be placed on the State Department’s

list of state sponsors of terrorism.

Syria has occupied Lebanon

continuously since 1976, in violation of

U.N. Security Council Resolution 520.

The United States is justified in

seeking to apply political and economic

pressure on Syria to change its

foreign policy. However, I will vote

against the Syria Accountability Act.

Of the 22 pages of this bill, only six

pages relate to sanctions that the

United States may apply to Syria. The

other pages contain 51 clauses of findings,

senses of Congress, and statements

of policy. These nonbinding provisions

build a case against Syria, and

I fear that those provisions could later

be used to build a case for a military

intervention against Syria.

In many cases, the non-binding

clauses in the bill appear to gloss over

the complex situation with respect to

Syria. For example, on page 11, the bill

speaks of ‘‘hostile actions’’ by Syria

against U.S.-led forces in Iraq. Yet, the

evidence is inconclusive as to the role

of the Government of Syria in the attacks

that have been carried out

against our troops in Iraq. Such insinuations

could be used to build the case

for a preemptive military intervention

against Syria, which, unfortunately, is

a very real possibility because of the

dangerous doctrine of preemption

hatched by the administration.

Other language in the nonbinding

clauses may simply be ill-considered.

For example, on page 7, the bill quotes

an unclassified CIA report that says

that it is ‘‘highly probable’’ that Syria

is working on biological weapons. In

the very next clause, however, the bill

quotes an Under Secretary of State as

saying that Syria ‘‘is pursuing’’ the development

of biological weapons. It is

exactly this kind of shading of intelligence

probabilities becoming certainties

for which Congress has criticized

the administration and its intelligence

agencies for creating the

hysteria that led to war in Iraq. Could

Congress be so willing to make the

same mistake with respect to Syria?

The United States should use economic

and diplomatic leverage to pressure

Syria to change its support for

terrorism and alter its foreign policy.

The sponsors of this legislation have

made improvements to several nonbinding

provisions in this bill, and they

have worked to address some of my

more serious concerns. While I appreciate

their cooperation, I still cannot

support this legislation. The findings,

statements of policy, and sense of Congress

provisions in the Syria Accountability

Act could be used to build a

case against Syria that could too easily

be hyped to imply congressional

support for preemptive military action

against that rogue state. I will vote

against this bill because of that dangerous

course that it may portend.