Mr. President, in debating

this resolution on which we spent so

much time and so much thought, we

are making one of the most important

decisions we have ever faced. The decision

to send American troops into battle

is not one we take lightly and I

don’t take lightly.

There is much at stake for this Nation.

There is much at stake for the

State of Nevada. Thousands of men and

women in Nevada would undoubtedly

be called to support or directly serve in

a military conflict with Iraq. Our pilots

from Fallon Naval Air Station and

Nellis Air Force Base are considered

the best aviators in the world. I know

they would be asked to play a leading

role in eliminating the threat posed by

Saddam Hussein.

I am personally very grateful for the

contributions that would be made by

the National Guard and Reserve forces

not only from Nevada but from across

our country. These heroic citizen soldiers

are such an integral part of the

American military. We simply could

not succeed without them. We must be

mindful that their sacrifices are great

because they leave their families and

civilian occupations behind and become

citizen soldiers. They serve

proudly on behalf of our Nation. When

called upon, they do not complain.

They did not question the need to act.

They did not ask why.

However, we must explain that these

brave men and women are the reason

for making this life-and-death decision.

Therefore, I rise today to explain to

one man why I intend to vote and how

I intend to vote. That man is President

George W. Bush. I say, President Bush,

your father may recall that a decade

ago I was the first Democrat in this

body to publicly support his request for

congressional authorization to make

war to free Kuwait. At that time, I

compared Saddam Hussein to Benito

Mussolini. My position has not

changed, although I believe our continued

efforts have degraded Hussein from

a second-grade dictator to a third-rate

thug.

In 1991, I said I thought the constitutional

role of the Chief Executive is to

make war. That is our role—halt or

prevent an unjust or unwise conflict. I

stated my strong belief that the President

must be able to use the diplomatic

corps and the Marine Corps with equal

facility, subject only to our power to

force a halt to actions taken contrary

to the national interests.

President Bush, I intend once again

to vote to give you that power on a

geographically limited basis, but I do

so with more reluctance because the

situation has changed. We do not, as

we did 10 years ago, face a dictator who

successfully invaded a tiny and relatively

defenseless neighbor.

We have not enlisted, as your father

did so magnificently, the whole world

to fight by our side. We have not yet

convinced our people or the world that

international law is on our side, or

that we are champions of the new

world order envisioned by your father

in which the power of a nation is measured

by the strength of its moral values

and not by the size of its Armed

Forces.

President Bush, the core ideal which

motivated the Founding Fathers was

that this would be a nation of laws not

men. As such a decent respect to the

opinions of mankind requires that we

should declare the causes which impel

our action. Our quarrel with Iraq is not

about one two-bit tin-horn dictator.

Rather, it is, and it ought to, be explained

as a question of the rule of law.

I am voting you this power, Mr.

President, because I know this nation

would be justified in making war to enforce

the terms we impose on Iraq in

1991, if we have to. But I am also voting

you this power secure in the knowledge

that no President of the United States

of whatever political philosophy, will

take this nation to war as a first resort

alternative rather than as a last resort.

I found most encouraging your

speech on Monday when you said war

was not inevitable.

I urge you Mr. President to continue

to make the case to the American people

and to the world. The international

coalition you have started to build is

critical, not only for military and cost sharing

reasons, but also to assist in

the rebuilding of Iraq.

Your father chose not to carry our

fight into the cities of Iraq in 1991, and

we have to live with his decision. He

gave the Iraqi leadership a chance to

reenter the community of peaceful nations.

Saddam Hussein has squandered

that opportunity.

We stopped the fighting based on an

agreement that Iraq would take steps

to assure the world that it would not

engage in further aggression and that

it would destroy its weapons of mass

destruction. It has refused to take

those steps. That refusal constitutes a

breach of the armistice which renders

it void and justifies resumption of the

armed conflict. President Bush, if you

believe the time has come to use force,

this resolution authorizes you to do so.

I trust you will use this force wisely.

I have not doubt that is Iraq continues

to refuse to abide by its agreement

the nations united in 1991 will

again support enforcement in the

United Nations. But Mr. President, the

rule of law matters, and so does a decent

respect for opinion of the rest of

the world. As President of the United

States you are the leader of the free

world; you are not its ruler.

I will support the Lieberman amendment.

But I have said enough, President

Bush, and I have said it to explain

my vote to you, to the people of Nevada,

to the people of this Nation, and

to the world. I have confidence, sir,

that you will do the right thing.