I thank the Chair. Madam

President, I am pleased to join with my

colleagues today on a bipartisan basis

to authorize the President of the

United States to use appropriate force

to defend the national security interests

of our country.

I join in this effort with a sense of regret

that events have come to this. No

one can contemplate the use of military

force with much satisfaction, but

I also approach this debate with the

firm conviction that the time has come

to unite, to take those steps that are

necessary to protect our country, including

the use of force, because all

other avenues have been exhausted and

seem unlikely to lead to the result of

protecting the American people.

Iraq presents a very significant potential

threat to our country. Saddam

Hussein possesses chemical, biological,

and some day will possess, if events are

allowed to run their course, nuclear

weapons. If there is one thing we can

say with absolute certainty, it is he is

developing these weapons for no benign

purpose. He does not need them to retain

his power within Iraq, but in all

likelihood will use these terrible weapons

to project that power, to intimidate

other states in the region, and potentially

one day for use against us as

well.

If there is even a 10 or 15-percent

chance of smallpox or anthrax or a

crude nuclear device could one day be

placed in the hands of suicidal terrorists

for use against the United States

of America, this is a risk we cannot afford

to run. We have attempted diplomacy

without effect. We have attempted

economic sanctions to no effect.

Regrettably, my colleagues and I

have concluded the President needs the

authorization to use force to protect

our country from this sort of eventuality.

Of course, we will continue to negotiate

with the United Nations. Of

course, we will gather our allies. But

the time has come to unite, to do what

it takes to defend our country.

I am pleased to join with my colleagues,

Senators WARNER, MCCAIN,

and LIEBERMAN, in giving the President

the authority he needs to do exactly

that.

I thank the Chair. I yield the floor.