Mr. President, I am

honored to be part of this historic debate.

Before I get into the substance of

my remarks, I thank all of my colleagues

on both sides of the aisle for

their excellent debate. I have listened

to a great deal of it. This is how the

Senate ought to work and ought to be.

This is a fine day for the Senate.

Today we are faced with the most

solemn decision a lawmaker can make:

whether or not to authorize the use of

military force. I approach this decision

with caution, deliberation, and seriousness.

As is our tradition, there has been a

great debate on this issue over the last

2 months. We have discussed multiple

strategies for dealing with Saddam

Hussein, and advanced many arguments

for and against the use of military

force. Some of these remain under

consideration, others have been wisely

tabled.

For example, the President’s original

plan of not consulting Congress or the

United Nations has thankfully been

abandoned.

In considering our next step, I have

spent considerable time listening to experts,

attending briefings, talking with

constituents, and even praying to arrive

at a sound conclusion.

I believe that there are two points—

one on each side, standing in equipoise—

that focus my attention, and

that embody the tension felt by all of

us.

On the one hand, going to war is the

most serious, even awesome decision—

awesome in the biblical sense of angels

trembling before God—that a lawmaker

is called on to make.

Invasion means that thousands of our

sons and daughters, the flowers of their

generation, will be put in immediate

harm’s way should we invade.

I have an 18-year-old daughter, who

along with her sister is the joy of my

life. When I think of thousands of

young people her age who have volunteered

to serve, and of the previous

generations of Americans who have

willingly laid down their lives in past

wars, and to whom we are eternally

grateful, I am filled with awe and

dread.

Poised against the solemnity of war

is the fact that a major, if not the primary

function of government is to secure

the safety of its people—to protect

the citizenry from threats, both foreign

and domestic.

Discharging this responsibility is the

very essence of a state and, if a real

danger exists, the government has a

solemn obligation to protect its citizenry.

These two looming issues push and

pull against one another and yield the

ultimate question we debate today‘

Does Saddam Hussein threaten the

citizenry of America to the point that

we must now consider the unthinkable

option of authorizing war in order to

protect ourselves?

Saddam Hussein is an evil man, a dictator

who oppresses his people and

flouts the mandate of the international

community.

While this behavior is reprehensible,

it is Hussein’s vigorous pursuit of biological,

chemical and nuclear weapons,

and his present and potential future

support for terrorist acts and organizations,

that make him a terrible danger

to the people to the United States.

If our other efforts to thwart the

threat posed by Hussein do not work, is

war justified? If justified, how long can

we leave Hussein alone before we need

to act?

The struggle for these answers come

in a brand new context. Our’s is a brave

new post 9/11 world, a time and place

where things are different and more

dangerous than before, much as we

wish they weren’t.

Those who would use terror—or those

who would aid and abet that terror—

pose a new danger to every one of us

living in the United States, whether in

midtown Manhattan or the wheat

fields of Kansas.

I have seen firsthand the devastation

that comes from being unprepared and

unprotected. On September 12, I peered

into the dark and smoky crater at the

World Trade Center with horror, an

image that still burns in my memory.

I have met with the families of victims

and heard about their losses, and shed

tears over the evil and mendacity of

our enemies.

I know it is my solemn obligation to

do everything I can to ensure that my

city, State, and country never again

endure such an atrocity. Yet, at the

same time, I know that war must be

our last resort.

When I consider that Hussein could

either use or give to terrorists weapons

of mass destruction—biological, chemical

or nuclear—and that he might just

be made enough to do it—I find, after

careful research, the answer to my

question: we cannot afford to leave him

alone over the next 5 or even 3 years.

I say this with caution and worry.

But I have searched my mind and my

soul and cannot escape this conclusion:

Saddam Hussein left unfettered will at

some point create such a danger to our

lives that we cannot afford to leave

him be.

In the post 9/11 world, inaction is not

an option: at some point, Hussein must

be de-fanged.

The question is how and when?

Do we mobilize our military for battle?

Do we take pains to ensure that

other possible options are exhausted

first? I say yes to both—proceed on

parallel tracks: prepared for the worst

and work toward, and pray for, the

best; empower the President to act to

protect our national security but hope

it will not be necessary.

Let me first address the question of

how by making three points.

One, we must certainly try less costly,

less ultimate options before we

choose the last resort, war.

Our first option must be working

with our allies at the United Nations

to secure a strict resolution that will

compel Saddam Hussein to disarm and

submit to unlimited and unrestricted

inspections.

The administration believes a unified

Congress that authorizes the President

to wage war will importune the United

Nations to take the kind of vigorous

and unified action that has eluded that

body for the last 11 years: real inspections,

real sanctions, real threats of

military force. I hope and pray they

are right.

Let me repeat: inspections and sanctions

backed by the threat of military

force. These must come first. These are

the reasons to favor this resolution.

And if after exhausting these options,

Saddam Hussein remains a threat, I believe

other nations will support and

follow us as we pursue the last option,

war.

Working cooperatively with our allies

in the United Nations must be a

paramount priority for us all. We need

their help not simply to force effective

disarmament in Iraq; they are also key

players in an historic fight—the war on

terror.

They provide us with intelligence to

protect ourselves from future attack;

they permit us to pursue our enemies

in foreign lands so that our foes know

that they have no haven from justice;

and they cooperate to help us choke off

terrorists’ financial support.

Without their help and co-operation,

the war on terror would be much more

difficult to wage. Therefore, their support

for our efforts on Iraq is essential

for our safety as a nation.

This new resolution puts far more

emphasis on international cooperation

first and is a substantial improvement

over what the President originally proposed.

Unfortunately, time and again, Hussein

has shown that the only language

he understands is the language of

power. By empowering the President to

use force, we will send a message to

both Hussein and the nations of the

world that the threat of force is real

and that we are serious about disarming

him.

Without this possibility, Hussein will

never allow inspections, and the probability

of more terror and horror will

increase. A determined U.N., backed by

the possibility of force, may finally

convince Saddam Hussein to submit to

the real inspections he has evaded for

the last 11 years.

Second, should we go to war, the

President must see to it that we don’t

lose vigilance in other aspects of the

war on terror, apart form Iraq, both

abroad and at home.

Al-Qaida and other groups will continue

to target our citizens; we must

not let down our guard. Countries like

Syria and Iran will continue to aid and

abet terrorists; we must keep a watchful

eye.

The President and the Secretary of

Defense have assured us that, if war become

necessary, our military can

launch a successful invasion of Iraq

without compromising these efforts.

In addition, if there is a war in Iraq,

we must not let it diminish our efforts

to make our homeland more secure—

our airports, sea ports, rail lines, nuclear

facilities, and our communications

infrastructure all remain unacceptably

vulnerable.

I have been quite critical of the administration

on this point and again

urge them to refocus their efforts. We

are about to spend billions of dollars to

reduce threats abroad; we should spend

a similar amount to safeguard ourselves

at home.

Third, the President must begin to

pay attention to our economy. Up to

this point, he has failed to do so. The

American people are particularly nervous

about our economic future and the

prospect of war only deepens these

fears. The President and Congress must

address this issue immediately.

People must have secure, family-supporting

jobs, access to quality health

care, and the ability to pay for necessities

like college tuition and prescription

drugs. Our epoque of prosperity

has quickly given way to an era of uncertainty.

I believe we can reverse that trend.

Our Nation is big enough and strong

enough to secure our safety abroad and

increase our prosperity at home. I urge

the President to pay equal attention to

both causes, which he has not done up

to now.

As I have discussed, I believe at some

point we will have to confront Saddam

Hussein. We should coordinate with our

allies in the United Nations; maintain

focus on terrorist threats at home and

abroad; and make a concerted effort to

revive our economy.

That is how our Government can secure

the safety of its people.

The second question is when to act.

Evidence suggests that we probably

have some time before the growing

threat posed by Saddam Hussein would

require military action. If I were President,

I would not go to war now. My

next step would be, as ours must be, to

explore fully the compelling force of a

determined United Nations.

Given the President’s recent statements

of support for action through

the U.N.; if he were to invade Iraq now

after passage of the resolution, he

would have completely misled Congress

and the American people.

As he said in Cincinnati on Monday.

I will, therefore, take the President

at his word and do my very best to hold

him to it.

I realize the resolution before us

would allow the President to act sooner

than that. If I had drafted the resolution,

it would surely have been different.

However, if each of us insisted

on our own resolution, we would have

535 resolutions, each with one vote, no

concensus—only paralysis.

In our post 9/11 world, there are no

good choices, only less bad ones. As we

move toward final passage, the choice

before us is this resolution—imperfect

as it is—or none at all.

Saddam Hussein, his pursuit of weapons

of mass destruction and the will he

has shown to use them, makes the nonat-

all option unacceptable.

So I will vote for this resolution.

More than anything else we can do,

this resolution will show Hussein and

nay naysayers in the United Nations

that we are serious about this war on

terrorism. We understand the challenges

of this brave new world and we

are prepared to meet them.

We do not want to send our sons and

daughters to war, yet we can never

again find ourselves unprepared: the

risks are far too great.

Certainly action—any type of action—

poses real danger and must be

taken with great caution and concern.

But sometimes doing nothing is riskier

than acting. This is one of those moments.

Therefore, I will cautiously cast my

vote for the Lieberman resolution. I

pray that we shall not have to use the

awesome authority it grants.

I yield back the remainder of my

time.