I thank the

Senator from Nevada very much.

Madam President, we are here today

to debate one of the most difficult decisions

that I, at least, have ever had to

make in my 18 years in the Senate.

There is no doubt in my mind Saddam

Hussein is a despicable dictator, a war

criminal, a regional menace, and a real

and growing threat to the United

States. The difficulty of this decision

is that while Saddam Hussein represents

a threat, each of the options for

dealing with him poses a threat—to

America’s service members, to our citizens,

and to our role in the world at

large.

It is clear none of the options that

confront us are easy or risk free. For

all of us, the upcoming vote on this

critical issue will reflect our best judgment

on which path will minimize the

risk to our fellow Americans because

we all know the risk cannot be eliminated.

And that judgment will, in turn,

depend on a complex interaction of

many factors, some of which we do not

know and perhaps cannot know.

It is clear military operations

against Saddam Hussein, of the sort

that are being discussed, pose serious

risks, and we should all admit to that.

Any military campaign runs very serious

risks to our service members. On

paper, we surely have an overwhelming

advantage against Saddam Hussein—in

the skill, the technology, and, of

course, dedication of our Armed

Forces.

We defeated Saddam quickly and

conclusively in 1991. In the decade

since, our force effectiveness has improved

dramatically, while many of

Saddam’s capabilities have deteriorated.

But a new battle against Saddam

Hussein, if it comes to that, will

be very different and much more difficult.

A U.S. victory might be quick, and it

might be painless. One hopes that will

be the case, but it may not be so. The

American people need to know a war

against Saddam will have high costs,

including loss of American lives. Our

confident assertions that Saddam Hussein

will quickly be deposed by his own

people have in the past been too optimistic.

Presumably, Saddam Hussein will be

more determined to use all the weapons

and tactics in his arsenal, if he believes

that our ultimate goal is to remove

him from power. The administration

assures us our troops have equipment

and uniforms that will protect

them from that risk, should that risk

arise. We can only hope to God they

are right.

We also acknowledge that any military

operations against Saddam Hussein

pose potential risks to our own

homeland. Saddam’s government has

contact with many international terrorist

organizations that likely have

cells here in the United States.

Finally, we also need to recognize

that should we go to war with Iraq, it

could have a serious impact on America’s

role in the world and the way the

rest of the world responds, therefore, to

America’s leadership.

We are told that if Saddam Hussein is

overthrown, American soldiers would

be welcomed into Baghdad with liberation

parades. That may be true. But it

is true the people who have suffered

most at Saddam’s hands are, of course,

his own citizens.

For many people around the world,

an American-led victory over Saddam

Hussein would not be cause for celebration.

No matter how strong our case,

there will inevitably be some who will

see a U.S.-led action against Iraq as a

cause for concern. At its most extreme,

that concern feeds the terrorist paranoia

that drives their mission to hurt

America. We can affect how deep that

sentiment runs by how we conduct ourselves—

whether we work with allies,

whether we show ourselves to be committed

to the reconstruction of Iraq

and to the reconciliation with the Arab

world. But we ignore all of that at our

peril.

Clearly, there are many risks associated

with the resolution we are considering

today, but it is equally clear that

doing nothing and preserving the status

quo also poses serious risks. Those

risks are less visible, and their frame of

time is less certain. But after a great

deal of consultation and soul searching,

I have come to the conclusion that

the risks to our citizens and to our Nation

of doing nothing are too great to

bear.

There is unmistakable evidence that

Saddam Hussein is working aggressively

to develop nuclear weapons and

will likely have nuclear weapons within

the next 5 years. He could have it

earlier if he is able to obtain fissile materials

on the outside market, which is

possible—difficult but possible. We also

should remember we have always underestimated

the progress that Saddam

Hussein has been able to make in the

development of weapons of mass destruction.

When Saddam Hussein obtains nuclear

capabilities, the constraints that

he feels will diminish dramatically,

and the risk to America’s homeland, as

well as to America’s allies, will increase

even more dramatically. Our existing

policies to contain or counter

Saddam will become, therefore, irrelevant.

Americans will return to a situation

like we faced in the cold war, waking

each morning knowing that we are at

risk from nuclear blackmail by a dictatorship

that has declared itself to be

our enemy, only back then our Communist

foes—in those so-called good

old days, which, of course, they were

not, but in making the comparison between

now and then, our Communist

foes were a rational and predictable bureaucracy.

This time our nuclear foe

would be an unpredictable and often irrational

individual, a dictator who has

demonstrated that he is prepared to

violate international law and initiate

unprovoked attacks when he believes it

serves any of his whims or purposes to

so do.

The global community in the form of

the United Nations has declared repeatedly,

through multiple resolutions,

that the frightening prospect of a nuclear-

armed Saddam cannot come to

pass, but the U.N. has been unable to

enforce these resolutions. We must

eliminate that threat now before it is

too late. But that isn’t just a future

threat. Saddam’s existing biological

and chemical weapons capabilities pose

real threats to America today, tomorrow.

Saddam has used chemical weapons

before, both against Iraq’s enemies and

against his own people. He is working

to develop delivery systems like missiles

and unmanned aerial vehicles that

could bring these deadly weapons

against U.S. forces and U.S. facilities

in the Middle East. He could make

these weapons available to many terrorist

groups, third parties, which have

contact with his government. Those

groups, in turn, could bring those

weapons into the United States and unleash

a devastating attack against our

citizens. I fear that greatly.

We cannot know for certain that Saddam

will use the weapons of mass destruction

that he currently possesses

or that he will use them against us.

But as we do know, Saddam has the capability

to do that. We know that very

well. Rebuilding that capability has

been a higher priority for Saddam than

the welfare of his own people, and he

has ill will toward Americans.

I am forced to conclude on all the

evidence that Saddam poses a significant

risk. Some argue it would be totally

irrational for Saddam Hussein to

initiate an attack against the mainland

United States and believe he

would not do so. But if Saddam

thought he could attack America

through terrorist proxies and cover the

trail back to Baghdad, he might not

think it is so irrational. If he thought,

as he got older and looked around an

impoverished and isolated Iraq, his

principal legacy to the Arab world to

be a brutal attack on the United

States, he might not think it is so irrational.

If he thought the U.S. would be

too paralyzed with fear to respond, he

might not think it was too irrational.

Saddam has misjudged what he can

get away with and how the United

States and the world will respond

many times before. At the end of the

day, we cannot let the security of the

American citizens rest in the hands of

somebody whose track record gives us

every reason to fear that he is prepared

to use the weapons he has used against

his enemies before.

As the attacks of September 11 demonstrated,

the immense destructiveness

of modern technology means we

can no longer afford to wait around for

a smoking gun. The fact that an attack

on our homeland has not occurred

since September 11 cannot give us any

false sense of security that one will not

occur in the future or on any day. We

no longer have that luxury.

September 11 changed America. It

made us realize we must deal differently

with the very real threat, the

overwhelming threat and reality of terrorism,

whether it comes from shadowy

groups operating in the mountains of

Afghanistan or in 70 other countries

around the world or in our own country.

There has been some debate over how

‘‘imminent’’ a threat Iraq poses. I do

believe Iraq poses an imminent threat.

I also believe after September 11, that

question is increasingly outdated.

It is in the nature of these weapons

that he has and the way they are targeted

against civilian populations, that

documented capability and demonstrated

intent may be the only warning

we get. To insist on further evidence

could put some of our fellow

Americans at risk. Can we afford to

take that chance? I do not think we

can.

The President has rightly called Saddam

Hussein’s efforts to develop weapons

of mass destruction a grave and

gathering threat to Americans. The

global community has tried but has

failed to address that threat over the

past decade. I have come to the inescapable

conclusion that the threat

posed to America by Saddam’s weapons

of mass destruction is so serious that

despite the risks—and we should not

minimize the risks—we must authorize

the President to take the necessary

steps to deal with that threat. So I will

vote for the Lieberman-McCain resolution.

This is a difficult vote, but I could

not sleep knowing that, faced with this

grave danger to the people of my State

and to all Americans, I have voted for

nothing more than continuing the policies

that have failed to address this

problem over the years.

Two months ago, or even a month

ago, I would have been reluctant to

support this resolution. At the time, it

appeared that the administration’s

principal goal was a unilateral invasion

of Iraq, clear and simple, without fully

exploring every option to resolve this

peacefully, without trying to enlist the

support of other countries, without any

limitation on the use of United States

force in the Middle East region.

The original use of force resolution

that the White House sent to the Congress

was far too broad in its scope and

ignored the possibility that diplomatic

efforts might just be able to resolve

this crisis without bloodshed. Moreover,

it appeared that the administration

planned to cut back its efforts in

the war on terrorism and shift all of its

attention and resources to Iraq, and

that would have been a tragic mistake.

I believe the war against global terrorist

networks remains the greatest

current threat to the security of America

over the long term and to our

forces overseas. We have seen that in

Kuwait in just the last week. America

cannot be diverted or distracted from

our war on terrorism. In the past

month or so, in my judgment, we have

begun to see an encouraging shift in

the administration’s approach. The

President stated earlier this week that

war is neither imminent nor unavoidable.

The administration has assured

us that whatever action we take toward

Iraq, it will not be permitted to

divert resources or attention from the

war on terrorism internationally.

Secretary Powell has been working

with the U.N. Security Council to put

together a new resolution to make

clear that Iraq must disarm, or face

the consequences. We have already

begun to see some encouraging movement

on the issue of Iraqi disarmament.

Other Security Council members—

I mentioned France and Russia,

as well as other Arab States in the

Middle East—have begun to talk seriously

about forcing Saddam to comply

with the U.N. resolutions. Saddam Hussein

has begun to make offers on inspections

and disarmament, offers

that, while inadequate so far, indicate

that he has at least begun to move off

his hardline position against inspections.

Obviously, much important and very

hard work remains to be done. That

will take tough negotiating with the

other members of the U.N. and a firm

line with Iraq. We need to be realistic

about how best to move forward.

Any headway we are making toward

getting Saddam to disarm has not occurred

in a vacuum. U.N. members did

not just suddenly decide to debate a

new resolution forcing Iraq to disarm.

Saddam Hussein did not just suddenly

decide to reinvite U.N. inspectors and

to remove the roadblocks that had hindered

their efforts in the past. Progress

is occurring because the President told

the United Nations General Assembly

that if the U.N. is not prepared to enforce

its resolution on Iraqi disarmament,

the United States will be

forced to act.

At this point, America’s best opportunity

to move the United Nations and

Iraq to a peaceful resolution of this crisis

is by making clear that the United

States is prepared to act on our own, if

necessary, as one nation, indivisible.

Sometimes, the rest of the world looks

to America not just for the diversity of

our debate, or the vitality of our

ideals, but for the firm resolve that the

world’s leader must demonstrate if intractable

global problems are to be

solved—and dangerous ones at that. So

that is the context in which I am approaching

this vote.

This resolution does authorize the

use of force, if necessary. Saddam Hussein

represents a grave threat to the

United States, and I have concluded we

must use force to deal with him if all

other means fail. That is just the core

issue. It is the only core issue. And

whether we vote on it now, or in January,

or in 6 months, or in 1 year, that

is the issue we will all have to confront.

War—if it comes to that—will cost

money. I and the Presiding Officer

dearly wish we could use that money

for other domestic purposes—to address

the very real needs that West

Virginia, Michigan, and other States

face in this tough economy. But, ultimately,

defending America’s citizens

from danger, their safety, and their security

is a responsibility whose costs

we must bear because this is not just a

resolution authorizing war; in my judgment,

it is a resolution that could provide

a path to peace. I hope that by

voting on this resolution now, while

the negotiations at the U.N. are continuing,

this resolution will show to

the world that the American people are

united in our resolve to deal with the

Iraqi threat, and it will strengthen the

hand of the administration in making a

final effort to try to get the U.N. to

deal with the issue. Given the difficulty

of trying to build a coalition in

the United Nations, I could not, in

good conscience, tie the President’s

hands.

The administration is in negotiations

on which the safety and security of all

Americans depend. I believe we must

give the President the authority he

will need, if there is any hope to bring

those negotiations to a successful conclusion.

So I will vote for the

Lieberman-McCain resolution. Preventing

a war with Saddam Hussein—

whether now or later—must be a top

priority. I believe this resolution will

strengthen the President’s hand to resolve

that crisis.

By my vote, I say to the U.N. and our

allies that America is united in our resolve

to deal with Saddam Hussein and

that the U.N. must act to eliminate the

weapons of mass destruction.

By my vote, I say to Saddam Hussein:

Disarm or the United States will

be forced to act. We have that resolve.

September 11 changed our world forever.

We may not like it, but it is the

world in which we live. When there is a

grave threat to Americans’ lives, we

have a responsibility to take action to

prevent it.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor.