Madam President,

after careful consideration, I have decided

to oppose the Bush resolution on

Iraq. This resolution would give President

Bush the unilateral authority he

seeks to go to war against Iraq without

international support or international

resources. The resolution includes only

tepid language supporting diplomatic

efforts at the United Nations.

The Senate is making a grave decision:

Whether to give the President unlimited

authority to go to war and send

American military men and women

into harm’s way.

I take this responsibility very seriously.

I have listened to the President

and his advisors. I have consulted with

experts and wise heads. I have participated

in hearings and briefings as a

member of the Senate, and particularly

as a member of the Intelligence Committee.

I have listened intently to my

own constituents.

The American people are deeply ambivalent.

The American people want a

safer world, a world in which distant

tyrants can’t threaten us and our bases

and our embassies and our treasured

allies. The American people are counting

on us to assess the Iraqi threat and

to confront it with our allies. They and

I firmly believe that Saddam Hussein is

duplicitous, deceptive, and dangerous.

Iraq has grim and ghoulish weapons

to carry out his evil plans. As part of

the Gulf War cease-fire agreement,

Saddam Hussein committed to destroying

its chemical and biological and nuclear

weapons programs and longerrange

missiles. Instead, Saddam Hussein

is trying to add nuclear weapons

to an arsenal that already includes

chemical and biological weapons and

ballistic missiles.

These threats cannot be ignored and

allowed to grow. But these are not only

threats to us. These are threats to the

international community, and the

international community must share

the responsibility of addressing them.

I support a robust multinational response

to the Iraqi threat. That’s why

I supported the Levin resolution, urging

the United Nations Security Council

to fulfill President Bush’s request

to demand Iraqi disarmament, verified

by unfettered inspections, and to authorize

the use of multinational force

if Iraq refuses to comply.

If the UN refuses to act, then Congress

would consider a request from the

President to authorize acting alone

against Iraq.

Let me be very clear on one point.

The United States always has the authority

to take military action in selfdefense.

That is our right under international

law, included as Article 51 of

the United Nations Charter, and I support

that.

President Bush says he has not yet

decided whether the use of military

force is necessary, and I take him at

his word.

The United States should first exhaust

all diplomatic and other nonmilitary

means.

The United States should give the

United Nations the opportunity to fulfill

its responsibility to address the

Iraqi threat.

The United States should fully pursue

whether the UN Security Council

will authorize the use of multinational

force.

The Bush resolution, the White

House resolution, would authorize the

President to send our Armed Forces to

war against Iraq without any further

consideration by Congress.

Under the Levin resolution, which I

cosponsored, Congress would remain in

session, standing ready to promptly reconsider

if the UN does not meet the

challenge.

I have had to ask myself, ’Why

should the Senate wait to see what the

United Nations will do before deciding

on the unilateral use of force?

The answer is this:

Voting now in support of unilateral

action would take the international

community off the hook.

Why would the other members of the

United Nations Security Council make

the tough decision to effectively authorize

war against a member state if

they know the U.S. will do it by ourselves?

I believe this resolution would actually

weaken the negotiating position of

the President and the Secretary of

State at the United Nations.

Why would other nations send their

troops into harm’s way if America is

ready to send our troops without them?

Why would other nations join us to

rebuild Iraq after a war if Uncle Sam is

willing to bear the financial burden, as

well as the dangers?

I’m concerned about the prospect of

America going it alone because I’ve

thought about the risks and consequences.

The risks and consequences of acting

alone are so much greater than they

would be for multinational action.

The risks to our troops are greater if

allied forces do not join the mission.

The challenge in post-conflict Iraq is

greater if other nations do not share

the burden and the cost.

The consequences for the war on terrorism

are greater if we lose the essential

cooperation of other nations in the

effort to pursue al-Qaida and other terrorist

groups. The consequences on our

economy would be severe.

A mandate from the United Nations

would mean the international community

against Saddam instead of the

United States against Iraq, and other

countries in the region would join our

coalition rather than obstructing or

opposing us.

I recognize that I will likely be in the

minority on this vote. The Senate and

House of Representatives will probably

grant the President the broad authority

he now seeks.

I will vote differently than the majority,

but I want my constituents, particularly

our men and women in uniform,

to know that I believe my vote

represents the wisest, most prudent

course with them in mind.

America’s soldiers, sailors, airmen,

and marines will always have my full

and steadfast support. I stand accountable

to the oath I took to defend the

Constitution against all enemies, foreign

and domestic. I hold myself accountable

to my constituents, and I am

prepared to defend this vote because I

think when history is written, it would

have been wiser not to give authority

to go it alone right now.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor.