That's why I am introducing the Children's Education Tax Credit Act today. This bill provides a $1,000 tax credit per child for education expenses. The tax credit will be given to families who devote their hard-earned money to purchase textbooks, supplies, educational computer software, tuition, and other resources their children need to excel in school.

Today, an average American family spends about $720 per year on each child's learning. Sadly, too many Americans are forced to choose between spending a little extra on their kid's learning or paying the rent. With the Children's Education Tax Credit, parents can better afford to make the best education choices for their children. It is vital that we reward investment in a child's education and encourage families to control more of their own money.

By letting parents decide how best their education dollars can be spent, we begin deferring to local communities and families the crucial decisions on how to educate a child. For the sake of our children, I urge that Members join me in fighting for sound education for our nation's children by supporting the Children's Education Tax Credit Act.

RESOLUTION OPPOSING THE UNILATERAL DECLARATION OF A PALESTINIAN STATE

HON. MATT SALMON

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 4, 1999

Mr. SALMON. Mr. Speaker, the Resolution I have introduced today expresses bipartisan, bicameral congressional opposition to the unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state and urges the President to do the same and promise that such a declaration would not be recognized by the United States. Before I discuss the merits of the bill, I would like to thank Majority Whip DELAY, as well as Representatives SAXTON and ENGEL for all of their work in crafting the resolution. I would also like to thank Senators BROWNBACK and WYDEN for introducing the companion resolution in the other chamber.

The United States owes Chairman Arafat no favors. At least eleven American citizens have been killed in Israel by Palestinian terrorists since the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993. Of the 15 Palestinians identified by Israel as participants in these attacks, most are free men, and four are reportedly serving in the PA police force. The Palestinian Authority harbors more terrorists who have murdered Americans than Libya.

The introduction of the resolution could not be more timely. Today, President Clinton is expected to meet with Chairman Arafat at the congressional prayer breakfast. His conversation with Chairman Arafat should make at least one point clear: The United States will NEVER recognize a unilaterally declared Palestinian state—whether the state is declared in this manner on May 4, 1999—the date the Oslo accords expire—January 1, 2000, or any date thereafter. It has been reported that Chairman Arafat may use the issue of statehood at the meeting to leverage the United States to place pressure on Israel to withdraw from additional land. President Clinton must not succumb to these tactics.

As our resolution states, at the heart of the Oslo process lies the basic, irrevocable commitment made by Palestinian Chairman Yasser Arafat that, in his words, ''all outstanding issues relating to permanent status will be resolved through negotiations.'' Resolving the political status of the territory controlled by the Palestinian Authority while ensuring Israel's security is one of the central issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Therefore, a declaration of statehood outside the framework of negotiations would constitute a fundamental violation of the accords.

In mid-July, Chairman Arafat stated that ''there is a transition period of five years and after five years we have the right to declare an independent Palestinian state.'' On September 24th, Chairman Arafat's cabinet threatened to unilaterally declare a Palestinian state that would encompass a portion of Jerusalem. The cabinet announced that ''At the end of the interim period, [the Palestinian Authority] shall declare the establishment of a Palestinian state on all Palestinian land occupied since 1967, with Jerusalem as the eternal capital of the Palestinian state.''

Jerusalem is the undivided, eternal capital of Israel, and U.S. law—the Jerusalem Embassy Act—recognizes that this should be U.S. policy. Palestinian threats to declare a state on land they do not have any territorial control over—particularly Jerusalem—at the very least amounts to a renunciation of the Oslo process, and could legitimately be interpreted by Israel as an act of war. The Administration has not effectively dampened the dangerous proclamations issued by the Palestinian Authority on statehood, and as May 4th rapidly approaches, if U.S. policy remains murky, hostilities could occur.

The most recent statements by Palestinian leaders have been confusing and somewhat contradictory. A number of reports indicate that plans for a unilateral declaration of statehood may be delayed—at least until after Israel holds elections on May 17th. However, some of the comments suggest that the Palestinians are still intent on declaring a state on May 4th. On January 24th, a senior Palestinian official told the Voice of Palestine that May 4th ''is a day [which has] international legitimacy'' and that ''the Palestinian leadership can not postpone this date for even an hour in announcing an independent Palestinian state.'' The day before, another senior official said that May 4th is ''a historic and vital day,'' suggesting that the Palestinians will indeed declare a state on this day.

The Clinton Administration has done little to discourage Palestinian aspirations of having a unilaterally declared state recognized by the United States. On several occasions over the past year, the Clinton administration has refused to express U.S. opposition to the unilateral declaration of an independent Palestinian state, and has left it as an open question as to whether the United States will recognize a unilaterally declared Palestinian state. As a case in point, during President Clinton's visit to Gaza, in December, Chairman Arafat reaffirmed his intention of establishing a Palestinian state with its capital in Jerusalem. Unfortunately, the President might have only encouraged this course when he said: ''[T]he Palestinian people and their elected representatives now have a chance to determine their own destiny on their own land.''

Recently, however, the President has issued more appropriate comments on the issue of statehood. In an interview for a London-based Saudi newspaper in mid-January, President Clinton said that: ''[We] oppose the declaration of a state or any other unilateral action by any party outside the negotiation process in a manner that could pre-empt the negotiations.'' He also said that, ''We are making maximum efforts to strengthen negotiations on the final status (of the Palestinian territories) and believe that those who think they can adopt unilateral measures during the transitory period are opening up a path to catastrophe.''

President Clinton's latest remarks on this issue are welcome but do not go far enough. A careful reading of his comments suggests that the United States may oppose a unilaterally declared Palestinian state, but has left open the possibility of recognition. It is critical for the President privately to inform Chairman Arafat and publicly tell the world that a unilateral declaration of statehood is a grievous violation of Oslo and will be firmly opposed, and never recognized by the United States.

I am encouraged that Congress is working in a bipartisan basis to head off this destabilizing threat to peace in the Middle East. It is essential that the United States speak loudly and clearly in advance of May 4th, to prevent a terrible miscalculation by Chairman Arafat.

PROTECTING ISRAEL

HON. TOM DeLAY

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 4, 1999

Mr. DeLAY. Mr. Speaker, I worked with Mr. SAXTON, Mr. SALMON and now over 60 cosponsors to introduce a resolution calling on the President to clarify American policy with respect to a unilateral declaration of an independent Palestinian state. I did this because I feel the Administration's policy regarding Israel and the Middle East process has been confusing and misleading not only for the American people, but for the international community at large, and especially for the parties to the peace process itself.

The United States has never endorsed the creation of a Palestinian state. After the signing of the Oslo accords, the U.S. made it clear that all questions of sovereignty and statehood were a matter for negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. However, First Lady Hillary Clinton's public statement last May that ''it will be in the long-term interests of the Middle East for Palestine to be a state . . . and seen on the same footing as any other state'' put U.S. policy on this issue in severe and grave doubt.

The First Lady's remarks came almost exactly one year before the scheduled expiration date in May, 1999 for completing the final status talks between Israel and the Palestinians under the Oslo agreement. Any unilateral declaration of statehood will constitute a fundamental violation of the Oslo accords because they were agreed to only after Chairman Arafat made an irrevocable commitment that, in his words, ''all outstanding issues relating to permanent status will be resolved through negotiations.'' Since resolving the political status of the Palestinian people while protecting the security of Israel is one of the central issues of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, any effort to act unilaterally on the issue will