

song from "The Graduate". "Joltin' Joe has left and gone away," sang Simon. "What're they talking about?" shot back the Yankee Clipper, "I haven't gone anywhere."

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to an American hero. Joe DiMaggio was the first of his kind, a sports legend of the stature only 20th Century America could nurture. He was also one of the last of his breed, a celebrity of shy, quiet dignity.

The son of a fisherman and high school drop out, Joltin' Joe learned the game that would make him famous hitting with a broken oar. He played semipro ball beginning at the age of 18, but by the age of 21, he had debuted with much panache in the majors. The New York Yankees scored perhaps their best hit as a team when they recruited Joe DiMaggio to play center field in 1936.

There was no one like him in the game. What other players had to work at, DiMaggio did with an innate ability that often surprised even the greats. In a professional career lasting only 13 seasons, he won three MVPs, and led the Yankees to ten pennants and nine World Series championships.

After his retirement in 1951, DiMaggio continued to make Americans' lives a little sweeter. His devotion to children, possibly strengthened by his estrangement from his own son, was evident in his commitment to the Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital Foundation and the Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital in Hollywood, Florida. Through his service, children and their families in South Florida could finally receive the specialized medical services they require.

Joltin' Joe passed away on March 8, 1999, and Paul Simon's words still ring true, "A nation turns its lonely eyes to you," not because we lack for great players in the many professional sports that pass our time today, but because in this commercialized age, we lack for heroes—the kind that legends are made of and the kind who, no matter what, maintain their public dignity. Joe DiMaggio did it, and there will never be another like him.

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this Resolution honoring Joe DiMaggio.

Joe DiMaggio was more than just a terrific ballplayer—he was special to Americans across our country because of his professionalism, his work ethic, and his remarkable grace.

We honor Joe DiMaggio for that, and we honor him as well for the particular importance he had for millions of Italian-Americans. It's easy to forget today how ingrained prejudices were sixty year ago. In 1939, Life magazine printed what it believed was a favorable profile of Joe DiMaggio. In the article, however, it noted that "Instead of olive oil or smelly bear grease, DiMaggio keeps his hair slick with water. He never reeks of garlic and prefers chicken chow mein to spaghetti."

For a generation of Italian-Americans facing daily bigotry, Joe DiMaggio was a hero whose quiet dignity and excellence shattered stereotypes and eloquently rebutted ignorance.

Casey Stengel once modestly and astutely said that "I know I'm a better manager when Joe DiMaggio's in center field." Mr. Speaker, I would only add to that that we have been a better country because Joe DiMaggio was an American.

□ 1230

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I urge the House to unanimously support the resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHIMKUS). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, House Resolution 105.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

EXPRESSING OPPOSITION TO DECLARATION OF PALESTINIAN STATE

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 24) expressing congressional opposition to the unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state and urging the President to assert clearly United States opposition to such a unilateral declaration of statehood.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 24

Whereas at the heart of the Oslo peace process lies the basic, irrevocable commitment made by Palestinian Chairman Yasir Arafat that, in his words, "all outstanding issues relating to permanent status will be resolved through negotiations";

Whereas 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;

Whereas a declaration of statehood by the Palestinians outside the framework of negotiations would, therefore, constitute a most fundamental violation of the Oslo process;

Whereas Yasir Arafat and other Palestinian leaders have repeatedly threatened to declare unilaterally the establishment of a Palestinian state;

Whereas the unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state would introduce a dramatically destabilizing element into the Middle East, risking Israeli countermeasures, a quick descent into violence, and an end to the entire peace process; and

Whereas, in light of continuing statements by Palestinian leaders, United States opposition to any unilateral Palestinian declaration of statehood should be made clear and unambiguous: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That—

(1) the final political status of the territory controlled by the Palestinian Authority can only be determined through negotiations and agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority;

(2) any attempt to establish Palestinian statehood outside the negotiating process will invoke the strongest congressional opposition; and

(3) the President should unequivocally assert United States opposition to the unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state, making clear that such a declaration would be a grievous violation of the Oslo accords and that a declared state would not be recognized by the United States.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from

New York (Mr. GILMAN) and the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. GEJDENSON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on this measure.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. GILMAN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in support of H. Con. Res. 24. It is a concurrent resolution expressing the sense of the Congress against a unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state and urging our President to assert clearly our Nation's opposition to such a unilateral declaration of statehood.

Mr. Speaker, over 280 Members of the House have cosponsored this measure, introduced by the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. SALMON), our colleague on the Committee on International Relations. I am pleased to cosponsor this measure with the gentleman from Arizona, and I thank him for his support of this critical issue.

Of concern to many of us, Mr. Speaker, since the signing of the Oslo Accords back in September of 1993 has been PLO Chairman Arafat's ongoing claim to unilaterally declare an independent Palestinian state on May 4, 1999. Despite recent contentions that he will not do so, regrettably Chairman Arafat has not yet categorically and publicly reversed that position.

Support has been growing in both the House and Senate for this resolution, a resolution opposing a unilateral declaration of independence. The Senate sent a clear message just last week when its measure was adopted by a significant vote of 98-1.

H. Con. Res. 24 expresses the opposition of the House to a unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state, simply because every issue in dispute between the Israelis and Palestinians must be negotiated in order to be resolved. A unilateral declaration of statehood by Chairman Arafat automatically falls outside the Oslo negotiating framework and would, therefore, constitute a fundamental and an extremely serious violation of the Oslo Accords.

H. Con. Res. 24 goes on to note that President Clinton should make clear that our Nation is opposed to such a declaration and that if such a declaration were to be made, our Nation would consider it a gross violation of the agreements already signed between the PLO and Israel and, moreover, would not be recognized by our Nation.

Chairman Arafat is expected to meet this coming week with President Clinton in Washington. Therefore, the consideration of H. Con. Res. 24 by the

House sends a distinct message to both Chairman Arafat and to President Clinton that Congress is unalterably opposed to such a dangerous unilateral declaration.

Mr. Speaker, we have a number of Members interested in speaking on this suspension, as the chorus of opposition to a unilateral declaration of statehood grows stronger each day. Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues' support for H. Con. Res. 24.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GEJDENSON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. RAHALL).

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished committee ranking member for yielding me the time.

Mr. Speaker, I have no illusions as to what the outcome of this vote will be, but I think it is necessary to rise in opposition to this resolution. It is well-intended, I am sure, and I certainly respect the sponsors of it and certainly respect the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN), the chairman of the Committee on International Relations.

The administration, Mr. Speaker, is unmistakably on record as opposing a Palestinian unilateral declaration of statehood. There is no real need for this resolution and particularly at this time, a very sensitive time in the Middle East itself.

In a letter from the State Department to the gentleman from New York, our esteemed chairman of the Committee on International Relations, dated March 9, U.S. policy was clearly stated, that the administration opposes unilateral actions, but it goes further in stating, and I quote:

"We believe that any congressional resolution should make clear our opposition to all unilateral acts." I stress the word "all," which the letter does in several different cases. "Singling out one side would not be as effective as stressing what both parties have already committed themselves to do."

Simply put, it was not only the Palestinians who signed the Oslo Agreement and later the Wye Accords. Israeli commitments as well should be reiterated in any congressional resolution on this subject. H. Con. Res. 24 simply fails to mention the other half of the equation. Failure to mention both parties in this resolution is only rhetoric aimed at this particular sensitive point in Israeli political elections at tilting the side toward one side or the other.

I reiterate that while I may be opposed to a unilateral declaration of Palestinian statehood at this time, although that does not make me in opposition to a Palestinian state, this particular resolution is one-sided and comes in an untimely manner and an untimely fashion for this Congress to be considering. I oppose the resolution.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY), the distinguished majority whip.

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for bringing this resolution to the floor, and I particularly thank the gentleman from Arizona not only for bringing this resolution but for his courtesy.

I rise to state that the United States position on the Middle East peace process must be made perfectly clear. Unilateral announcement of an independent Palestinian state cannot be accepted.

Yasser Arafat's plan to announce Palestinian statehood when the Oslo Accords expire is nothing more than an attempt to shatter a fragile peace in the Middle East. Israel is an island of democracy surrounded by hostile enemies. Defending this lone democracy in the Middle East should be nothing short of a crusade for America.

The Clinton administration tries to govern with words only, typically talking on both sides of every issue. A successful foreign policy cannot be built upon equivocation and confusion. It is no wonder that the Israelis are worried about U.S. support. Every time peace talks stall, it is Israel that is expected to surrender more territory and concede more diplomatic ground to come to the negotiating table.

Mr. Speaker, peace depends on the willing participation and agreement of both parties. Any unilateral declaration of an independent Palestinian state must be clearly condemned for all time by the United States. American silence now will spell chaos in the Middle East in the future. I urge my colleagues to support the Salmon resolution and send a very clear message not only to Israel but the world that we stand beside Israel.

Mr. GEJDENSON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I think that we are missing an opportunity here. It is frankly somewhat sad. We are at a stage in the peace process that is probably more tenuous than at any time since Oslo. It is clear by every assessment, from the Israelis and the Americans as well, that the Palestinians are fulfilling their obligations with every possible effort.

We find ourselves here today with a resolution that does not even quote the President correctly. It says the President should. The President has already come out against a unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state. But the President rightly goes on to say there should not be unilateral actions by either party.

We have elections in Israel, we have some politics here at home as well, but what is frightening to me is that some Members have not recognized the change that has occurred in the Middle East. In Israel, from Sharon to the far left, we now have unanimity that working with the Palestinians and coming to an agreement is the most important act for the security of their families and children. But here in the Congress, we have to find people that are harder line than even the Israeli

government under Mr. Netanyahu. Everyone agrees that I know in this Chamber that there should not be a unilateral declaration of statehood. But I think not to recognize the change that has occurred in the Middle East, with the Palestinians at the PNC officially removing the language that offended the Netanyahu government even though the Labor government before argued that language had already been removed, that we continue to deal with the Palestinians not as if they were partners in the peace process but the same adversaries they were in the past I think is a mistake.

For those of us who care about the children and the women who die in marketplace bombings, who worry about the poverty and starvation in camps, we need to move this peace process forward and we need to take opportunities like this one not simply to single out one side, especially at a point in history where there is hope for a comprehensive peace. I hope that we will find ourselves in the future recognizing the change that has occurred in the Middle East, that Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Peres and Mr. Rabin have all been negotiating in good faith with Mr. Arafat, that we want no unilateral actions, and that this resolution, and I do not want to put judgments on the motivation of the sponsors, but in my opinion is not helpful coming at this time.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 5 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Arizona (Mr. SALMON), the sponsor of this resolution.

Mr. SALMON. Mr. Speaker, this resolution we are considering today is clear-cut but critical. It expresses congressional opposition to the unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state and urges the President to do the same. As far as the comments that were just made regarding the intentions of the sponsor or the cosponsors, I am glad that the gentleman did not question the motives of this cosponsor since it would implicate over 280 Members of the House and 98 Senators in the Senate who voted for this resolution who believe that this is an idea whose time has come, who believe that rather than spout rhetoric it is time to be ahead of the curve and make sure that the Palestinian authority understand that our intentions are clear so that we can avert bloodshed.

The consensus on the need for this resolution is clear. As I mentioned, over 200 Members of the House have cosponsored H. Con. Res. 24. I worked diligently with Democrats as well on this bill. I believe that the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL), the gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN), the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. ROTHMAN), the gentleman from New York (Mr. ACKERMAN), the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) and some of my other friends on the other side of

the aisle can attest to this. Language that criticized the administration was removed, even though we all know that the administration, had the administration reacted sooner against the possibility of a unilaterally declared Palestinian state, Chairman Arafat would probably not be meeting with President Clinton this week to discuss the matter. There is also no reference in the resolution about the First Lady's damaging comments on the subject which may have encouraged a belief with many in the Palestinian Authority that the U.S. might support and recognize such a unilaterally declared state.

We must act now. The Palestinian Authority plans to unilaterally declare parts of Israel, including Jerusalem, as their own state as early as May 4 of this year, the target date the Oslo Accords set for a permanent accord to be reached. Doing so would obliterate Oslo and would mark a repudiation of the commitment of Chairman Arafat to negotiate all permanent status issues. At the start of the Oslo process, 4 days before the famous September 13, 1993 White House lawn ceremony that publicly launched the peace process, Chairman Arafat wrote a letter to then Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin, in which he pledged that "The PLO commits itself to the Middle East peace process and to a peaceful resolution of the conflict between the two states and declares that all outstanding issues relating to permanent status will be resolved through negotiations."

□ 1245

Clearly, if Arafat plans to declare as his own land land that belongs to another country outside of the Oslo process, then he is inviting war upon the region. The President himself has suggested that such a move would be catastrophic, and Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, Martin Indyk, warned in October of dire consequences of unilateral declaration of independence: In the process of the Palestinians seeking to assert the sovereignty of their so-called independent state and the Israelis seeking to deny it, a clash would seem inevitable. I can see a movement from a kind of declaration of independence to a war of independence that would be the absolute antithesis of the peace process.

Arafat has been planning for many months now to declare unilaterally a Palestinian State and reject the Oslo process. In late February, Arafat said we assure the whole world that the establishment of the independent state of Palestine with holy Jerusalem as its capital is a sacred and legitimate right of the Palestinian people. It is a goal that our people will not accept to advocate or to give up no matter what the difficulties and the challenges.

Other Palestinian leaders have been echoing Arafat's announcements. As recently as Sunday, this last Sunday, a senior adviser to Chairman Arafat said, quote, the Palestinian position is still

that May 4 is the fixed date on declaring statehood, but he also added that the Palestinian leadership will study all proposals and ideas. Another key Palestinian official said in late February that we are moving forward in our preparations for the day, May 4, the date of declaration of Palestinian state. More specifically, on September 24 Chairman Arafat's cabinet announced that at the end of the interim period the Palestinian authorities shall declare the establishment of the Palestinian state on all Palestinian land occupied since 1967, which Jerusalem is the eternal capital of the Palestinian state.

The provocative statements by Arafat and his ministers show that his intentions are real and imminent. However, Arafat knows that he cannot simply choose to declare another country's land as his own so he has been trying to gain the support of other countries. Arafat has already visited with leaders of several other countries including Muammar Kadafi, the terrorist leader of Libya, in his worldwide tour to gain acceptance. Arafat's courting of Kadafi should in itself make clear to the U.S. policymakers that a unilaterally-declared Palestinian state could result in the development of an alliance that is detrimental to the U.S. interests.

Let us also remember that Arafat supported Saddam Hussein during the Gulf War, and many Palestinian citizens took to the streets a few months ago to burn American flags in protest of America's bombing campaign of Iraqi military targets.

In any event, on March 23 Arafat will be visiting President Clinton to press the United States to support his move, and the United States must not succumb to his tactics. When President Clinton and the administration confront Arafat on this issue, they must be firm that the United States will never recognize a unilaterally-declared Palestinian state.

This is timely. I hope that we can receive cooperation. The bulk of the people in this body, Republican and Democrat, support this measure. Let us move forth in a good faith effort of bipartisanship to get this done.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2½ minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. MORAN).

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I have to rise in opposition to this resolution. There are several reasons why I think this further complicates the peace process.

For one, it does not condemn unilateral acts by both Israelis and Palestinians, but only the Palestinian authority. The House leadership brought it up under suspension of the rules, so there are no amendments that would make it a more balanced bill. The committee refused to consider an amendment that would have achieved that objective, and so the perception is going to be that we are acting in a biased, unbalanced manner even though our intelligence community, as the ranking

member of the Committee on International Relations has said, has reported that the Palestinian authority is doing everything it can right now to comply with the Oslo requirements.

We are in a terribly delicate situation. I do not think that it is in anyone's interest to declare a Palestinian state on May 4. For one thing, it plays into the hands of the right wing elements in Israeli politics with elections occurring in 2 weeks. For another thing, it means that Mr. Arafat is going to find it much more difficult not to declare Palestinian statehood because it is going to look as though he is bowing to the pressures of the American political system. That is not in our interests.

Mr. Arafat is our best hope right now, like it or not, for advancing the peace process. We all have a stake in advancing the peace process. If Mr. Arafat goes, who knows who will take control of the Palestinian community? The likelihood is that it will be someone far more radical and extreme. We have lost King Hussein, a leader of the peace process; we lost Mr. Rabin. We cannot afford to lose a Palestinian leader who is now fully invested in bringing about a successful conclusion to the Mideast peace process.

Mr. Speaker, I do not disagree with the sponsor of this resolution or the chairman of the committee who I know want the peace process to succeed, but I do disagree with their judgment that this is constructive. I do not think it is constructive. I do not think that the resolution that we passed in June of 1997, even though that also was non-binding, was constructive. In fact, it led to riots, it led to people being killed. The actions that we take have real consequence, even though they may be nonbinding. The only hope for peace to succeed is that we be an unbiased, balanced broker for peace in the Middle East. It is particularly important right now that we sustain that principled effort and not bow to domestic political considerations.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2½ minutes to the distinguished gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON).

(Mr. SAXTON asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, over the past several months Chairman Yasser Arafat has repeatedly threatened to unilaterally declare a Palestinian state in the West Bank on the Gaza Strip with, of course, East Jerusalem as its capital. We cannot recognize any such declaration, and we urge Mr. Arafat not to pursue this reckless course. Such a declaration will have a destabilizing effect on the Middle East and will render the Oslo Accords and the Wye agreements meaningless.

Recently, however, Mr. Arafat suggested a PA confederation with Jordan. Perhaps that could be subject to negotiation, but only after Mr. Arafat and the PA have concluded successfully the promises that they have already made.

For example, first, Mr. Arafat and the PA must reduce the size of the Palestinian authority to the agreed upon level so that it does not violate the Oslo Accords.

Second, Mr. Arafat and the PA must end all PA-run incitement of violence, and anti-Semitism, and vilification of Jews and make meaningful reconciliation between Jews and Arabs a real possibility.

Third, Mr. Arafat and the PA must renounce the validity of the right of return, a policy which by definition challenges the viability of the state of Israel even after Palestinian independence.

Fourth, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Arafat and the PA should renounce and cut off ongoing ties to terrorists. Their insistence on releasing terrorists who plan acts of terror and provide the wherewithal to commit such acts must come to an end.

And fifth, Mr. Arafat and the PA must establish modes of economic transparency and accountability relative to foreign aid received by them, thus preventing endemic corruption and theft currently plaguing the very structure of the Palestinian authority.

Among the many disturbing incidences noted in Point 2 is the PA-run anti-Semitic incitement mainly to children via textbooks, newspapers and television and radio programs. The PA through international anti-Semitic rhetoric, even in school books, is attempting to raise Palestinian children with a deep rooted hatred toward Israel and Jews.

Simply put, the PA and Yasser Arafat are subverting the peace agreements signed and perpetuating hostile feelings toward Israel and ultimately brainwashing Palestinian children. Therefore, I conclude by saying I support H. Con. Res. 24 and continue to oppose the creation of a Palestinian state on a unilateral basis.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL).

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

For 50 years and more my dad and I have supported two things: The rights and the freedoms of Israel and the cause of peace in the Middle East. I do not believe the action that we are taking today is furthering either of those goals. What we are doing is rejecting an evenhanded, honest broker approach to peace in the Middle East and substituting for that a participation in and invective directed at only one side. There is fault aplenty in the Middle East, but I do not believe that a honest broker should spend his or her time engaged in the finding or the charging of that fault. Clearly here we are breaching that rule.

Mr. Speaker, I would urge my colleagues to reject this resolution. It is not in our interests, it is not in the interests of the Palestinians, and it is not in the interests of the Israelis. It is

clearly not in the interests of peace. We best serve our own interests by working for peace and by seeing to it that all parties are aware of the fact that that is our sole and only goal in this matter. We are breaching that rule.

I would urge my colleagues to keep in mind the fact that there is plenty that this country can do which will have much more beneficial effect on the cause of peace. We can work to see that both sides honor the Wye Accord and the Oslo commitments. That is not being done, nor is it being furthered here, and I would admit that there is fault again on both sides. But that fault is not to be judged by us, if we are to be honest brokers in the cause of peace. Rather, it should be the effort of this country to see to it that we bring the parties together to negotiate in an honest and an open and as friendly a fashion as we can arrange. Clearly that is not being accomplished here.

I am not here to take sides with the Israelis, nor am I here to take sides with the Palestinians. I am here to say that what we are doing here is wrong, it is not in the interests of this country, nor is it in the interests of the cause of peace.

I would observe that it is very easy to start a war in an area like the Middle East where tensions and passions are high. It is very, very hard to stop. This country has invested hundreds of billions of dollars in peace in the Middle East. Do we want to reject it by the adoption of a resolution which does nothing of good and which very probably is going to contribute much mischief and much evil to an already overheated area where tensions are high and where the peace process is not prospering.

I would urge my colleagues to reject this resolution, to support measures which will put us in the position of being, as the United States, honestly concerned about peace in the area, in the position where we are leading both parties towards peace and towards an honest negotiation. This peace is not going to be resolved by invective. It will be resolved by all working together and by the leadership of the United States in the cause of peace.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, since there are a number of Members seeking recognition on this issue, I ask unanimous consent that the time for debate be extended by 20 minutes on each side.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHIMKUS). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

There was no objection.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. CAMPBELL).

Mr. CAMPBELL. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN) for yielding this time to me particularly because he knows that I oppose this resolution, yet in his graciousness offers me the time to speak my mind. For that I am most grateful.

This is the wrong time for this resolution. Why? Because there is an election pending in Israel. This resolution, although not necessarily so intended, will unavoidably have an effect on that election in Israel, and here is why.

First of all, the resolution itself does not criticize any potential unilateral action on the Israeli side. Part of the debate in the Israeli political elections right now is the record of the Likud government, to bring about successful peace negotiations.

□ 1300

For this resolution, therefore, to have no criticism at all, no comment at all, about threatened unilateral actions which would jeopardize that peace process on the Likud side, plays into one side in that political battle. It supports Likud's characterization of the negotiations over that of Labor.

Secondly, the mere fact that we are considering the resolution at this time influences the Israeli elections. I believe it is fair to say that the Likud government has argued that one of their advantages, which they present to the Israeli electorate, is that they are singularly able to have influence in the halls of Congress. The fact that we are taking this resolution up now, with the election pending, plays to that perception. It is a mistake; nevertheless, that would be the perception, and so the timing is wrong.

Accordingly, I would urge my colleagues who cannot vote no to vote present as a way of saying that whether or not the matter is appropriate, it is not appropriate at this time.

Lastly, I intend to vote no because I believe that the people of Palestine are entitled to their own country. That does not mean that they can threaten Israel. It does not mean that they will practically have a country until they reach an accommodation with Israel. I strongly strongly stand for the right of Israel to be free, secure and safe. All of that must be negotiated.

But to the child born in a refugee camp who has never known a home except a refugee camp, to the child born in Gaza whose parents go up to work through a chute, as though a cattle chute, every day into Israel, to the resident of the West Bank who cannot carry on the trade with Jordan, I say you have a country; and you have the right to say you do. Everything else is subject to negotiation.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BONIOR), the minority whip.

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from New York (Mr. CROWLEY) for yielding me the time.

Mr. Speaker, all of us hope and pray for a just and a lasting peace in the Middle East. The question that we face today is how can we best achieve that? What can the United States do to encourage both sides, the Israelis and the Palestinians alike, to overcome years of suspicion and sorrow and anger and disappointment? How can we hope to move the peace process forward?

I regret to say that I come to the conclusion that this resolution takes us in the wrong direction. I join my previous two colleagues, the gentleman from California (Mr. CAMPBELL) and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL) in that view. It is, I believe, a one-sided resolution that will only set things back. If it passes, I think it risks undermining our credibility. It risks frustrating our progress and, indeed, I think it risks postponing peace.

If this House is to take a position on the peace process, I think what we ought to do is tell both sides that they ought to live by the agreement that they have made, to abide by the agreement that they have made.

Choosing sides now, and that is what the resolution does, I believe, is short-sighted. There is, as we know, an election going on in Israel and there is a great deal of anxiety and a great deal of tension in the Palestinian community. Lives are literally hanging in the balance. What we do today could have enormous implications for that peace process, and I think the United States should do everything it can to remain a firm, neutral arbiter in this ongoing process.

I urge my colleagues to oppose this resolution.

Mr. SALMON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to respond to a couple of the things that have been said on the other side. First of all, I think as the debate goes forward we will see clearly that this is a bipartisan measure. It looks as though it is becoming a polarization between the Republicans and the Democrats with the Republicans favoring this measure and the Democrats not. Nothing could be further from this truth. In fact, we have well over 280 cosponsors, 100 of those Democrat Members, courageous Members, the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS), many, many, congressmen on the other side, who believe that this is an idea that will strengthen the peace process and not harm it.

I also might suggest there have been those who have said suggest that this might be irresponsible, not well timed, would harm the peace process. I might remind Members that just a few short days ago, 98 members of the Senate and one against voted for this exact same measure word for word, and I really think that it is getting kind of a misrepresentation today as something that is kind of out there on the limb when really it is not. It is a very responsible measure.

I might also say that it is intended to protect the peace process because if the Palestinian Authority did declare unilateral statehood it is tantamount to war, and the consequences would be extremely dire.

To my knowledge, the Israelis have not proposed any unilateral measure outside of the negotiations, and so if they had proposed and if anybody on the other side can come up with just

one unilateral action that the Israelis have proposed that is outside of the Oslo Accord, please bring it forward and we will add it to a resolution and bring it up next week.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. FORBES).

(Mr. FORBES asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FORBES. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from Arizona (Mr. SALMON) for his leadership on this question.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, we are here today contemplating passage of this most necessary resolution because of the public pronouncements of Yasser Arafat. He has necessitated this action because in direct contravention of the Wye and Oslo agreements, he has put out there the notion that he may, in fact, declare unilaterally a Palestinian state. If there is ever an act that would sabotage the hopes for peace and security in the region, it would be that unilateral declaration.

Yasser Arafat unquestionably remains, in fact, a professional terrorist. He has American, Israeli, European and Arab blood on his hands. There are many of his allies, the Hezbollah and the Hamas, who consider themselves close allies, who would like nothing better than a declaration of independence by Yasser Arafat sometime in May. It would give them the opportunity to have a state that is fully sovereign and inviolable; able to import and manufacture any weapon; turn a police force that in all reality is actually an army into what we know it to be; free to support terrorism and poised to attack Israel and possibly Jordan.

From his past actions, we can only infer that a unilateral declaration by Yasser Arafat would be absolutely the matter that would destroy the process for peace and security in the region. Therefore, we are obligated, as a nation who has been an honest broker in this process, to bring this resolution forward and to state for all the world that we will not stand for a unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state that would really lead, frankly, to the compromising of the security and the safety and the peaceful coexistence of Israel.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. PRICE).

(Mr. PRICE of North Carolina asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that this resolution is going to pass overwhelmingly today. No one has argued, after all, that a unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state is a helpful idea, especially in light of the precarious state of the peace process and the impending Israeli elections.

The resolution, moreover, has been redrawn since the last Congress, to clarify that it opposes the unilateral declaration of Palestinian statehood, not Palestinian statehood as such.

The most promising path to peace, most of us agree, and the most promising path to the satisfaction of both Palestinian and Israeli aspirations, is to have no provocative unilateral actions taken by either side but, rather, to continue the process of negotiation and cooperation mapped out in Oslo.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I must add that both the timing and the content of this resolution give cause for great concern.

The resolution is one-sided in focusing its attention on what the Palestinians need to do to promote the peace process with no attention to Israeli obligations stemming from the Oslo and the Wye Accords.

The Oslo agreement signified that the Israelis and Palestinians have become partners on the road to peace and both sides must live up to their obligations and avoid provocations that undermine the peace process.

The ranking member of the Committee on International Relations, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. GEJDENSON), proposed language in committee that would have made this a more balanced resolution, asserting United States opposition to "a unilateral declaration of statehood or unilateral actions by either party outside the negotiating process that prejudice or predetermine those negotiations."

Israel has been and remains our strongest and most reliable ally in the Middle East. Declaring as part of this resolution that they too must be responsible for carrying out their obligations would not undermine our relationship or threaten its future. In fact, it might make it stronger.

Mr. Speaker, I hope and believe that Chairman Arafat has no intention of declaring statehood unilaterally, despite the arrival of the deadline date anticipated at Oslo. Our administration has already made it abundantly clear that it is opposed to a unilateral declaration of statehood. No one doubts that.

So why are we considering this resolution now? And will this resolution make it harder or easier, politically, for Chairman Arafat to do the right thing?

I think I know the answers to these questions, and I wish the sponsors of this resolution had conscientiously thought them through before bringing this resolution to the floor today.

Mr. SALMON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. FOLEY).

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the resolution of the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. SALMON) and I want to underscore once again the United States Senate, in a vote of 98-to-1, passed the exact same resolution, the exact same resolution word for word.

We oppose the PLO's unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state, despite the First Lady's claim that there should be one. Many in the PLO leadership seem to think that the final word

on a Palestinian state will come from the PLO and no one else. Well that assumption cannot be more wrong.

I will remind Mr. Arafat that unilateral action violates the basic provisions of the Oslo peace process. I will also remind Mr. Arafat that since the Oslo peace agreement was signed in 1993, the U.S. has provided hundreds of millions of dollars in aid to the Palestinian Authority for maintaining its commitment to bring peace to the Middle East.

I have always been skeptical of that commitment, and if the PLO moves toward unilateral declaration of statehood it will prove to the world what I have always suspected, the PLO is committed to rhetoric, not peace.

Mr. Arafat, the U.S. Congress is putting you on notice, declare statehood on May 4 and we will declare your financial support from the U.S. null and void.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. ROTHMAN).

(Mr. ROTHMAN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ROTHMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. SALMON) for his bill.

Mr. Speaker, which country is America's greatest ally in the Middle East? Which country votes with the United States 95 percent of the time at the United Nations, more so than any other American ally? Which country allows U.S. planes to fly over her airspace? Which country cares for America's soldiers and her hospitals and is our partner in developing a missile defense system? Who is the Middle East's only democracy and the longest and best ally of the United States?

Israel.

Mr. Speaker, the resolution pending before this body right now is very simple. It simply reaffirms America's commitments to both her number one ally in the Middle East, Israel, and to the peace process that began with the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993.

Palestinian threats to unilaterally declare statehood is a violation of the Oslo Accords that they signed. A unilaterally declared Palestinian state, without borders agreed upon by the state of Israel, would take Israeli land, would threaten Israel's people and would, yes, threaten Israel's very existence.

America, and the United States Congress, must be very clear to the Palestinian Authority. When you wrongfully threaten America's best and most strategic ally in the Middle East and one of America's greatest allies in the world, there will be immediate, lasting and severe consequences.

□ 1315

Mr. Speaker, the United States must not recognize a unilaterally declared Palestinian state, and I urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

Mr. SALMON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. REYNOLDS).

Mr. REYNOLDS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of House concurrent resolution 24 expressing this Congress's opposition to a unilateral declaration of an independent Palestinian state.

Mr. Speaker, peace in the Middle East cannot be achieved through unilateral declarations. A lasting peace can and will only be achieved at the bargaining table, through the give and take of diplomacy and negotiation.

PLO leader Yasser Arafat's repeated assertions that he would declare a Palestinian state on or after May 4, 1999, are both an affront to and a violation of the spirit of the Oslo Accords, threatening not only a delicate peace process, but an escalation of violence and bloodshed.

Palestinian statehood is a fundamental issue in the Arab-Israeli negotiations and one that needs to be addressed through deliberation and consensus, not posturing and proclamation. America's response to these declarations must be certain and unambiguous: That we oppose any and all arbitrary declarations of statehood, and would not under any circumstances recognize a unilaterally declared Palestinian state.

When President Clinton meets next week with Yasser Arafat, he must repeat this Congress's and this Nation's resolve that any Palestinian state must be created at the bargaining table.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. BERMAN).

(Mr. BERMAN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to give my prepared remarks; I would rather at this point take a little time to respond to some of the comments that have been raised on this issue, because I think that the resolution of the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. SALMON) has received a bit of an unfair rap.

This is not a resolution to catalog all of the violations that have occurred by one party or another and to make an accurate statement of who has been wronged and who has not been wronged. It is not about the past, it is about the future. I say most respectfully, when I hear the gentleman from California (Mr. CAMPBELL) say, I want to see a Palestinian state, my guess is, if asked, the gentleman from New York (Mr. FORBES), would say, I never want to see a Palestinian state. I think what the gentleman from California (Mr. CAMPBELL) wants and what the gentleman from New York (Mr. FORBES) wants or what I want is irrelevant.

The parties agreed at Oslo to decide this most fundamental of issues: the negotiations over what kind of entity will be there in the final status talks and negotiations between the parties. It is not a U.S. decision, and it is not a Members of Congress decision.

Mr. Speaker, all this resolution does is say, Congress opposes in every way it can such a fundamental and material breach of the Oslo process as the unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state. If the Israeli cabinet and the Israeli Knesset announced tomorrow that they were going to annex every portion of the West Bank now under Israeli military occupation, which is the vast, vast majority of the West Bank, people would say, wait a second, you are fundamentally breaching the commitments you made under Oslo, and they would be accurate in saying so. This is the exact equivalent. However, no one in responsible positions in Israel has suggested annexation, a unilateral annexation, except in retaliation for the declaration of statehood; but on the Palestinian side, a number of leaders under the Palestinian Authority have threatened the unilateral declaration.

So I can sit here and talk about whether enough guns have been confiscated by the Palestinian Authority or whether terrorists have been released or what is the state of Israel's settlements, and I have opinions on all of those different issues. This is not a resolution to catalog all of those questions; this is a resolution that goes to the heart of the breach that will destroy the peace process, and that is unilateral declaration of statehood.

One final point. There is a lot of talk here about U.S. as honest broker, U.S. as evenhanded. Let me tell my colleagues, the Palestinians, Chairman Arafat, the leadership of the Palestinian Authority, wants the U.S. involved in the peace process because of the U.S.'s relationship with the State of Israel, because the U.S. has been Israel's strongest ally, because Israel has come to the U.S.

The U.S. role, yes, is to be an honest broker and to play a facilitating role and to bring the parties together and to push the peace process forward. But make no mistake about it. If parties wanted evenhanded, neutral people who have demonstrated equal distance from all of the parties, they could have gone to the Swedes or Norway or to the European Union to play this role. No. The Palestinian Authority recognizes that it is the U.S. and its relationship with Israel, close as it is, that makes it a useful party to help facilitate these talks. It is not for the U.S. to be evenhanded; it is for the U.S. to recognize its relationship with Israel and to play that kind of a role, and that is the way this process will succeed, with the United States playing that role.

So I commend the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. SALMON). I think this is a good resolution. This recognizes that a fundamental breach might very well occur and we should right now let everyone know that this destroys the peace process and we think it is a big mistake, and on the other issues, let us work to resolve them and move that process forward.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H. Con. Res. 24, expressing congressional opposition

to the unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state.

The most basic and fundamental principle of the Middle East peace process is that all issues related to the permanent status of a Palestinian entity must be addressed through negotiations.

A unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state would, by definition, constitute a blatant violation of that principle and fly in the face of Palestinian commitments under the Oslo accords.

Palestinian statehood—more than any other issue—goes right to the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict. One side cannot act alone in determining this status and in answering the numerous questions that it raises: Where should its borders be? What should be the limitations on its sovereignty? How will Israel's security be guaranteed?

A unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state would destroy the peace process. Years of hard work, sacrifice and efforts to build trust would go down the drain in the blink of an eye. There would be no winners, only losers.

As Prime Minister Netanyahu recently stated, Israel would respond "very forcefully" if such a declaration were made. This response would probably include an Israeli decision to annex portions of the West Bank currently under their control.

Although you wouldn't know it from reading the text of this resolution, President Clinton has repeatedly declared strong opposition to the unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state and made it abundantly clear that it would not be recognized by the United States.

Nevertheless, Palestinian Authority Chairman Yassar Arafat has refused to rule out the possibility.

As recently as February 20, a high level Palestinian Authority official said, and I quote, "We are moving forward in our preparations for the day, May 4, the date of the declaration of a Palestinian state."

So, as much as I'd like to believe the conventional wisdom that Chairman Arafat will not make a unilateral declaration of statehood, it is clear that we as a body must go on record to express our complete and total opposition to such an act.

I urge my colleagues to support H. Con. Res. 24.

Mr. SALMON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT).

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Arizona for yielding to me. I stand in support of his resolution.

I also want to associate myself with the comments just made by the gentleman from California (Mr. BERMAN). I think that was an excellent analysis of the delicacy of the decisions that are going to be made in the next few weeks.

The repeated threats to unilaterally declare a Palestinian state are as unstabilizing, as destabilizing, as unsettling as anything could be in this process. That action is in violation of the agreement as I see it. Article XXXI of the Oslo II Accords clearly states, "Neither side shall initiate or take any step that will change the status of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip pending the outcome of permanent status negotiations."

Obviously, this is at the heart of the outcome of those negotiations. Obviously, this is a core issue that more than any other can provide great imbalance at a time when the Middle East has at least within sight the opportunity for peace, the opportunity for balance there.

Mr. Speaker, our response to what the Palestinians might do would be crucial. Chairman Arafat's understanding of our response is crucial. We need to make it clear that we will not recognize a unilaterally declared State; that the peace process would be in jeopardy; that the United States will do its best to help mediate this conflict, to help ensure permanent peace, but that the timing could not be worse than the timing that is projected to declare this state, a timing only days before an election in Israel. Elections are volatile times anywhere. They are most volatile in the Middle East; they are most volatile in Israel. The debate is a difficult debate to achieve. It is particularly difficult to achieve in the middle of an election campaign.

Mr. Speaker, our message to Chairman Arafat should be, do not take this step, do not jeopardize the process. Do everything you can to stabilize the situation with Israel. Our message to Israel should be to work hard for peace.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS).

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to set the record straight and to argue that support for this resolution is the single-most helpful thing we can do for Yassar Arafat to continue the peace process.

In recent months, I had occasion 3 times to discuss with Mr. Arafat and his associates this issue. Last summer, then Speaker Gingrich and Democratic Leader Gephardt led a small group of us to the area for discussions. Last December, the President went with a few of us to talk to both sides and we spent considerable time with Mr. Arafat discussing this issue.

Earlier this year, I had the privilege of addressing the Palestinian National Council, along with Former Prime Minister Peres and the former head of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev. My message on all three occasions was very simple: A unilateral declaration of statehood by Arafat would permanently destroy the peace process. Let me repeat that. If Arafat goes ahead with a unilateral declaration of statehood, whether it is on May 4 or May 25, or July 11, the peace process is over.

Let me say to some of my colleagues, some on my side of the aisle who are straining for equivalence, the equivalence would be to call on Israel, not to unilaterally declare statehood. Israel has been a State for over 50 years, an ally of the United States, a member of the United Nations with diplomatic representation all over the world. There is no equivalence here, because the two sides are not equivalent. We

are talking about a unique historic situation whereby a sovereign and independent state is in the process of voluntarily negotiating the surrender of territories it occupies, and possibly negotiating the creation by mutual consent of another state.

Now, some have belittled this resolution as being not binding. Well, it may not be binding, but it surely has consequences. Let me state here and now so that there will not be any question or doubt about it, that if Arafat does declare unilaterally a Palestinian state, I intend to introduce legislation in this body which will cut off all aid to the Palestinian Authority instantaneously. So this is not an academic debate. Should it be necessary to introduce such legislation, it will pass overwhelmingly.

Mr. Speaker, some think that since there have been technical violations on both sides of the Oslo Accords, we should discuss all of those. I think it is extremely important to realize that obviously there will be charges of technical violations of an incredibly complex, life and death agreement that might eventually solve this long-simmering crisis. But we are not talking about little technical violations. A unilateral declaration of state by Arafat terminates the peace process.

Since I am passionately committed to the peace process for the sake of the Palestinian people, for the sake of the Israeli people, for the whole region and indeed, for global stability, I urge my colleagues to support this resolution. It is a carefully crafted, balanced, reasonable resolution, the purpose of which is to save Arafat from the hot-heads in his own camp. There are people within Arafat's group who are pushing him for a unilateral declaration of state. If he follows their advice, the peace process is doomed.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all of my colleagues to support this resolution. I commend my friend, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. SALMON) for introducing it.

□ 1330

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 2 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to express my strong support for this legislation which expresses congressional opposition to the unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state and urges the President to assert clearly United States opposition to such unilateral declaration of statehood.

Mr. Speaker, Yasser Arafat's repeated threats that he would unilaterally declare a Palestinian state on May 4, 1999 are a grievous violation of the spirit of the Oslo Accords. At the heart of the peace process lies the fundamental commitment that all outstanding issues relating to permanent status will be resolved through negotiations.

In breach of this central obligation, Mr. Arafat is asserting that he can preempt the negotiations and act unilaterally on the critical and crucial issue of

statehood. While Israel has committed itself to continuous negotiations to resolve all issues, Mr. Arafat's threat is imperiling the peace process.

Clearly a unilateral declaration of statehood would violate the very principles on which the Oslo Peace Accords are based, and such an action would without question trigger a cycle of retaliation and escalation, possibly leading to violence and perhaps a collapse of the peace process itself.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be a cosponsor of this legislation, and I strongly urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL).

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New York for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be the lead Democrat on this resolution, and I want to thank the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. SALMON) for his leadership in sponsoring this resolution.

As the gentleman from Arizona said before, this is a bipartisan resolution. It has 280 cosponsors, which is a majority of this House. What this does is simply bring Congress in line with what has been said many, many times before by President Clinton, by the administration, and by anyone who is in the know about the Middle East, that a unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state destroys the peace process. Clear and simple.

So if we want the peace process to continue, then there ought to be no unilateral declarations of any kind. If we want to destroy the peace process, then Mr. Arafat can go right ahead and issue his unilateral declaration.

Some of my colleagues have said this will influence the Israeli elections. That is nonsense, because every mainstream party in Israel, every candidate for prime minister in Israel who is in the mainstream is opposed to a unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state. So this will not affect the Israeli elections. It simply holds Mr. Arafat's feet to the fire.

Now we know Mr. Arafat has a way of talking out of 32 sides of his mouth. We want him to keep his commitments. This is a very, very balanced resolution, and I want to read some of it. Simple. It says, "Whereas at the heart of the Oslo peace 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.'" That is from Yasser Arafat's own mouth. Why would anyone be opposed to holding his feet to the fire on that?

The resolution further states, "Resolved by the House of Representatives * * * That (1) the final political status of the territory controlled by the Palestinian Authority can only be determined through negotiations and agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority." Who could oppose that?

"(2) any attempt to establish Palestinian statehood outside the negotiating process will invoke the strongest congressional opposition," as it will. Finally, "(3) the President should unequivocally assert United States opposition," which the President has, "to the unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state, making clear that such a declaration would be a grievous violation of the Oslo accords and that a declared state would not be recognized by the United States."

If you ask me, this is again certainly a mainstream resolution. It has broad bipartisan support. It is only asking the parties to keep the commitments to which they made.

Mr. Arafat has to understand that there will be severe consequences if he does not fulfill his commitment, blowing up the peace process and a cut off of American aid. So, again, this is bipartisan. I strongly urge my colleagues to support it. I thank the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. SALMON) for his leadership.

Mr. GEJDENSON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY), ranking Democrat and soon to be chairman again of the Committee on Appropriations.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I will vote for this resolution because I am against all unilateral agencies in the Middle East. But do not kid ourselves by saying this is a balanced resolution. It is not. If it were, it would take note of all unilateral actions taken by all parties in the Middle East, including some unilateral actions taken by this very Congress.

I believe that there will be a Palestinian State someday, but I think it should be established through direct negotiations with Israel. I believe the United States will have an embassy in Jerusalem, but I believe it should be, again, at the end of the process because to attack precipitously will simply inflame the situation and make the peace process more difficult.

I also believe, however, if this Congress is going to be fair-minded in urging people like Mr. Arafat not to unilaterally declare a Palestinian State, and I agree he should not, then this Congress should also be fair-minded in noting the actions on the part of the Israeli government in taking unilateral actions with respect to some settlement activities in the West Bank and in the Jerusalem neighborhoods.

It just seems to me that if Congress wants to be constructive rather than simply political, that when it brings resolutions to the floor such as this, they ought to be more balanced than this is.

I say that as a friend of Israel. I say that as the person who, for 10 years, chaired the Subcommittee on Foreign Operations, Export Financing and Related Programs. During that time, that committee provided immense amounts of aid to Israel with my support.

But I think that, if Congress wants to help move the peace process forward, it

needs to be more balanced and more constructive than it usually is. This resolution I think, while it is correct in asking Mr. Arafat not to proceed, it is most certainly not correct to call it a balanced resolution because most definitely it is not.

Mr. GEJDENSON. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. SALMON), the sponsor of the resolution.

Mr. SALMON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New York for yielding me this time. I might also congratulate the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY). I had no idea he was reregistering as a Republican, obviously, if he is going to be the chairman of the Committee on Appropriations. I think that is a great move.

I would also like to thank the people who have tirelessly worked on behalf of this resolution. I would like to thank on our side most of all the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON) for his tireless efforts. He introduced the legislation last year and has been working on it for a long, long time.

I also owe a great debt of gratitude to the majority whip, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY) for making H. Con. Res. 24 a foreign policy priority in the 106th Congress.

The gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL), the lead Democratic sponsor, has been an enormous help in moving the resolution forward. The gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. ROTHMAN) and the gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN) have also contributed both in front and behind the scenes.

Moreover, the help of the gentleman from New York (Mr. FORBES) and the gentlewoman from Nevada (Ms. BERKLEY) in gathering cosponsors is greatly appreciated. Last, I would really like to thank the gentleman from New York (Chairman GILMAN) for making this a priority of the Committee on International Relations and bringing it to the floor.

I think many have spoken about this resolution in ways that I think really do not grasp the essence of what we are trying to accomplish. But there have been a few that I think have very cogently delineated what exactly this bill does.

I think of the comments of the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) and I think of the comments of the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. ROTHMAN). They understand what this is all about.

What this is about is to strengthen the peace process. Many times here in the Congress we have tried to be ahead of the curve, not to cause problems, but to make sure that it is clear in the minds of those that we are negotiating with, that we deal with in good faith, that they are clear of our intentions.

I recall when we were dealing with China, and they started lobbying missiles in the Taiwan Strait, that Congress was very forceful in communicating to China what our intentions were

and what our relationship with Taiwan is and will be in the future.

Those statements were not harmful to our relationship with China. They were clear statements of a purpose, of what we stand for, of what we are about. As was mentioned, there is nothing in this resolution that denounces anything that the Palestinian Authority has done.

All it does is denounce what they might possibly do and let them know, with due process and clear intention, that if they declare unilaterally a Palestinian state, that the United States will not recognize that, end of story. There is no beating up on them. There is no beating our chests. It is simply a clear delineation of what we stand for and what we believe.

As far as the peace process is concerned, we are all committed. Those who have suggested that this might somehow thwart the peace process, I think they know better. I think that sometimes their rhetoric gets a little reckless and out of control, but, frankly, I think they know better.

They know what the intentions of this resolution are, and that is why it passed the Senate 98 to 1. That is why there are 280 cosponsors, because it is very plain, straightforward, and to the point.

It reiterates what the American people and the Congress have believed for a long, long time, and that is that the peace process cannot proceed if reckless action such as declaring unilaterally a Palestinian state goes forward.

As the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) aptly pointed out, it would completely obliterate, explode the peace process. That is not what we are about.

For those who have suggested the intentions are somewhat different, I ask them to please don their reading glasses and take another look at it, try a little harder to understand it. It is not that difficult.

Therefore, I urge my colleagues to support the resolution that we are considering today, which underscores three important and timely points: (1) The final political status of the territory controlled by the Palestinian Authority can only be determined through negotiations and agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority; (2) any attempt to establish Palestinian statehood outside the negotiating process will invoke the strongest congressional opposition; and (3) the President should unequivocally assert United States opposition to the unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state, making clear that such a declaration would be a grievous violation of the Oslo Accords and that a declared state would not be recognized by the United States.

The resolution is forward thinking. Its intention is to prevent bloodshed. The Palestinian Authority must understand that it cannot break away from peaceful negotiations and receive support and recognition from the United States.

Before I close, I would like to thank Representative SAXTON for all of his work on this effort. And I owe a debt of gratitude to the Majority Whip, TOM DELAY, for making H. Con.

Res. 24 a foreign policy priority in the 106th Congress. The lead Democratic cosponsor, Representative ELIOT ENGEL, has been an enormous help in moving the resolution forward. Representatives ROTHMAN and SHERMAN have also contributed both in front and behind the scenes. Moreover, the help of Representatives FORBES and BERKLEY in gathering cosponsors is greatly appreciated. And lastly, I thank Chairman GILMAN for his commitment to bring this resolution to the floor.

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H. Con. Res. 24.

This resolution was introduced barely six weeks ago to make clear the United States' position on the Middle East peace process.

Today, this resolution will send a clear signal to Palestinian and other Middle East leaders that this government remains unified on two things.

First, we unconditionally support the Middle East peace process and the agreements that have been entered into by the Palestinians, Israelis and other nations.

Second, we stand firmly and unconditionally opposed to actions that either undermine the peace process or contradict the Oslo or Wye agreements.

A unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state will only lead to turmoil and destabilize the peace process.

The recent passing of King Hussein of Jordan combined with the upcoming election in Israel places the already fragile peace agreement on even shakier ground.

That is why it is imperative for all parties, including the United States, to redouble their commitment to a fair and lasting peace.

Again, I am pleased to support this resolution because I believe it clearly and fairly reinforces our support for peace in the Middle East.

Mr. LAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in support of H. Con. Res. 24 expressing the House's opposition to the unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state, and urging the President to clearly state that the United States government is united in its opposition to such a move—one that would certainly destabilize the Middle East peace process.

Several critical points must be understood. First, it is Palestinian Authority chairman Yasir Arafat who has suggested that he might unilaterally declare a free and independent Palestinian state on May 4th of this year. This unilateral step would contravene the entire process that was set in motion by the Oslo Accords and confirmed in the Wye River Memorandum. The fundamental premise of this process is one that Yasir Arafat himself recognized in a letter to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin years ago where he wrote that: "all outstanding issues relating to the permanent status will be resolved through negotiations." The threatened unilateral declaration of statehood flies in the face of this understanding and resorts to one side taking matters into its own hands. It is thus a violation of commitments made at Oslo and Wye.

Second, such a step would certainly destabilize the peace process and serve as a catalyst for violence in Israel and in those areas already governed by the Palestinian Authority. Effectively, therefore, a unilateral declaration by the Palestinian Authority could be interpreted as a threat of violence. This too flies in the face of the tenets of the peace process and calls into question Mr. Arafat's trustworthiness as a negotiating partner.

Third, while some have suggested that this resolution should also call upon Israel as well to avoid unilateral actions that might be questioned under the Oslo framework, such an inclusion would lack any balance and proportionality. Israel has not threatened to abdicate its commitments and unilaterally determine a final status issue of the magnitude of Palestinian statehood.

Fourth, the United States Congress has supported the Oslo process and the position that the parties themselves must resolve such thorny issues through negotiation. The United States Senate has remained true to this position by passing its resolution on this matter last week by a vote of 98 to 1. The House must do the same today. And the entire Congress must thereby insist that the Administration support resolving any permanent status issues through negotiations and agreement, not by unilateral action. The Administration must clearly state that any unilateral declaration of statehood by the Palestinian Authority will not receive the recognition of the United States and that the Administration will encourage its allies not to afford it any recognition either.

Mr. Speaker, I traveled to Israel last December with the President as the designee of the Speaker of this House. On that trip and others, I have seen up-close the challenges that this tiny island of democracy in the Middle East confronts and the risks she has taken for peace. Today, Yasir Arafat suggests the Palestinians may abandon the peace process and unilaterally declare a Palestinian state; tomorrow, he will threaten to declare Jerusalem as its capital.

Mr. Speaker, we must stand with our friends when they are challenged, and today that means standing with Israel.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my concern over language utilized in H. Con. Res. 24. Although I supported the resolution, I feel that Congress did not have an adequate opportunity to more fully discuss all unilateral declarations by any party to the Middle East peace process, including those by the United States. I believe that final status issues should be subject to good faith negotiations by both sides.

Mr. BENTSEN. Mr. Speaker, as an original co-sponsor of H. Con. Res. 24, I rise in strong support of this resolution and urge its adoption.

This resolution not only opposes a unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state, but also urges the President to make very clear the opposition of the United States to such unilateral action. A unilateral declaration would be brinkmanship of the most irresponsible kind, a provocative act that would force the State of Israel to respond and a direct affront to the spirit of the Oslo accords.

Only six years ago, at the Oslo accords, Israeli and Palestinian negotiators took significant steps towards achieving peace and stability in the Middle East. Oslo forged a commitment to cooperate and strive for a lasting peace through open and honest negotiations.

Unfortunately, the peace process is now seriously threatened by a repeated threat by Palestinian leaders to unilaterally declare statehood once the Oslo accords expire on May 4. Such a declaration would short circuit the peace process, roll back the progress that has been made and undermine the hard work of all those who want meaningful peace in the Middle East.

Both Israeli and Palestinian leaders made a commitment at Oslo to resolve differences through negotiation. As Chairman Arafat said himself in a letter to Prime Minister Rabin in 1993, "All outstanding issues relating to permanent status will be resolved through negotiations." Chairman Arafat must be held accountable to this promise. A unilateral declaration would terminate the negotiations and risk a needless, perilous escalation of this conflict. Such defiance would compel the State of Israel to respond to protect its security, likely leading to escalating conflict.

The people of the Middle East have lived with conflict, violence and bloodshed for too long. Now they have the opportunity to negotiate a permanent peace. This opportunity must not be sabotaged by a unilateral declaration. The Oslo peace process has presented a valuable opportunity for the people of the Middle East to begin healing the wounds of centuries of conflict and distrust. A unilateral declaration of statehood would reopen those old wounds and inevitably lead to more violence and bloodshed.

It is my hope that both Israel and the Palestinians will live up to their commitments in the Oslo accords. This resolution puts the Congress on record in support of negotiation, not brinkmanship and unilateral action. That is the right road to peace.

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this resolution expressing congressional opposition to the unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state. My support, however, is given with a degree of reluctance. I believe that the unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state is in direct conflict with the spirit of the Oslo Accords and would be a fatal blow to the ongoing peace process. I hope that our Palestinian and Israeli friends will continue to work together through the negotiating process to come to resolution on the final status of Palestine.

Mr. Speaker, I am, however, disappointed with the one-sidedness of this resolution. I am disappointed that my colleagues on the International Relations Committee did not see fit to amend the resolution as my colleague Mr. Gejdenson proposed. He asked that the resolution reflect the positive efforts made thus far by both parties to the negotiations and acknowledged that unilateral actions of any kind by either party are contrary to the spirit of negotiation. I wholeheartedly agree. Though I will vote in favor of this resolution, it is my hope that in the future this body keep in mind the necessity of fairmindedness in language and treatment for all parties in the Middle East working to find resolution to these extremely sensitive, contentious issues.

In a recent editorial to the Washington Post, Dr. Henry Kissinger noted that the role of the United States in the peace process is to help each party find terms that meet their own needs and yet are compatible with the necessities of the other. "As keepers of the diplomatic process, we should be steering the parties to a realistic dialogue on those subjects on which the survival of both sides truly depends." Today, we are sending a strong message to the Palestinian Authority not to take irrevocable action for which serious consequences will result. However, by condemning unilateral action by only one party to the negotiation, I believe we fail to meet our obligation to help the parties raise the dialogue to a higher level.

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the resolution. A unilateral declaration of statehood by the Palestinians would be a provocative act that would threaten the peace process. The President opposes such a declaration, and Congress should put its opposition on the record.

Both the Oslo Accord and the Wye Memorandum prohibit unilateral actions by either side. For years, it has been mutually understood that critical final status issues—prime among them the question of a Palestinian state—must be resolved in the context of direct negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians, not through unilateral actions.

My only problem with this resolution is that it is not strong enough. Congress should be on record opposing all unilateral acts, including, but not limited to, a declaration of Palestinian statehood. This resolution would be immeasurably strengthened if it opposed any and all unilateral actions by either party. In my view, Congress can do its part to advance the peace process by urging both parties to resist political temptations and refrain from unilateral actions.

Mr. Speaker, attaining peace in the Middle East is of paramount importance to U.S. national interests. The alternatives to a successful peace process are economic disruption, terrorism, and even war. The ability of future generations of Israelis and Palestinians to live in peace and enjoy economic prosperity depends on the peace process. The two main ingredients to continuing the peace process are active U.S. involvement and strict adherence to the historic agreements hammered out in Oslo and at Wye. This resolution urges one party to fulfill its commitment. In order to achieve peace, all parties must do their part.

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my strong support for the passage of H. Con. Res. 24 expressing the opposition of this Congress to the unilateral declaration of a Palestinian State.

As you might remember, Mr. Speaker, five years ago Israel and the Palestinian Authority joined together in Oslo, Norway and signed the Oslo Accords as the first step towards a negotiated permanent peace accord. The Oslo Accords agreed to by both sides stated that any declaration of Palestinian Statehood must be the result of bilateral negotiation and mutually agreed security.

That being said, Chairman Arafat has announced on several occasions since Oslo his intentions to unilaterally declare an independent Palestinian state this May. Adding fuel to the fire have been the remarks last year of First Lady Hillary Clinton suggesting that a Palestinian State is in the best long term interest of the region, statements by officials at the State Department suggesting that the Palestinians should move forward and even President Clinton himself whose visit late last year to Gaza had all the pomp and circumstance of an official "state" visit.

While the Administration has expressed their opposition in recent weeks to a unilateral declaration of a Palestinian State, it is clear that Congress must now send Chairman Arafat a strong message in the absence once again of a clear and consistent Clinton Administration policy. Additionally, I am concerned that the Administration may be attempting to hold hostage U.S. assistance in the region due to Israel's reluctance to fully implement the Wye Agreement in response to Chairman

Arafat's intentions to unilaterally declare statehood. Clearly, Mr. Speaker, this once again shows the Administration's willingness to send the Palestinians the wrong message. It is my fear that if the Clinton Administration continues on this course, we risk blowing a hole in the peace process and permanently injuring the relationship we have with America's strongest ally in the region, Israel.

Throughout my first two terms in Congress I have invested a great deal of time helping to ensure that we can reach a negotiated peace in the Middle East. I have served as an international observer of the Palestinian Elections, Chairman of the House Republican Israel Caucus and have made several trips to the region. I know from my first hand experiences and meetings with leaders on both sides, that a lasting peace in this region can only be achieved through negotiation and agreement by both Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

Mr. Speaker, the Senate has already acted on an identical resolution which passed by an overwhelming vote of 98 to 1. I urge my colleagues in the House to follow suit and send Chairman Arafat and the Clinton Administration a message that any declaration of a Palestinian State must be along the guidelines of the bilateral negotiations contained in the Oslo Accords.

Mrs. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution because we, as a nation, must make it unmistakably clear that a unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state by the Palestinian Authority is totally unacceptable.

The United States must never recognize a unilaterally declared Palestinian state. Such an act does nothing to further the peace process. It does, however, present a direct affront and challenge to Israel, one of our strongest allies.

A unilaterally declared Palestinian state would violate the most basic principles upon which the Middle East peace process has rested since the Oslo accords. Most importantly, it would dramatically destabilize the Middle East and increase the risk of renewed violence that could spell an end to the Middle East peace process.

A unilateral action by one party would allow this situation to snowball out of control. Too many people of good will have worked for too long trying to address these issues. We must make it clear that the Palestinian Authority must not abandon its commitments.

The interests of the United States require political, economic and social stability in the Middle East; the long-suffering people of the region deserve true peace. Yet clearly, we cannot impose a solution on the parties. Only Israel and the Palestinians—together—can forge a mutually acceptable solution to these difficult issues. The United States must continue to do everything in its power to assure that the parties to the negotiations stay the course.

As the resolution properly notes, Palestinian Authority Chairman Arafat, at Oslo, made a basic irrevocable commitment that "all outstanding issues relating to permanent status will be resolved through negotiations." The final political status of the territory controlled by the Palestinian Authority can only be determined through negotiations and agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

Chairman Arafat and the Palestinian Authority made an agreement with Israel that these issues would be resolved through negotiations, not through unilateral declarations. Just

as Israel agreed to a process for resolving these issues, so did the Palestinians. Both Israel and the Palestinian Authority must honor their agreements.

I urge my colleagues to support this important resolution.

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my views on H. Con. Res. 24, a resolution expressing Congressional opposition to the unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state.

Mr. Speaker, I oppose any unilateral action, by any of the parties to the Oslo Agreement and the Wye River Agreement that would endanger further progress in the Middle East peace process. I agree with the many observers who believe that for the Palestinian authority to declare a Palestinian state, at this time, would be disruptive and dangerous for the Middle East peace process. Such a unilateral declaration could also have a negative impact on the upcoming elections in Israel. While the Palestinian people do have the right of self-determination, the declaration and establishment of a Palestinian state is an issue best dealt with in the context of a negotiated, comprehensive peace agreement.

Mr. Speaker, I also agree with the remarks of Mr. Dennis Ross, President Clinton's chief Middle East peace negotiator, regarding the negative impact on the peace process of the current Israeli government's continued push to build and expand Israeli settlements on the West Bank. Such settlement activity not only creates "new facts on the ground" but they create real obstacles to the completion of a fair and enduring peace between the Israelis and the Palestinian people.

Mr. Speaker, I will support this resolution today. However, I continue to urge both sides, the Palestinians and the Israelis, to avoid any unilateral actions which could endanger the Middle East peace process. We need to build more progress towards a peaceful solution, not more obstacles thrown in the path of peace.

Mr. WEYGAND. Mr. Speaker, as a cosponsor of H. Con. Res. 24, I urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

Since the United States officially recognized the state of Israel on May 15, 1948, we have enjoyed a close diplomatic relationship. As the only democracy in the Middle East, Israel has been a strong ally in this often tumultuous region and, in turn, the United States has provided necessary foreign aid. Without the strong support of our allies, including Israel, it is certain that long lasting peace would be far more difficult to achieve in the Middle East.

In the summer of 1997, I accompanied a congressional delegation to Israel to obtain a better understanding of the many important and delicate issues in the Middle East and to discuss the latest developments in the peace process. It is my belief that in order to secure U.S. interests in the Middle East, we must help ensure economic and political stability in Israel as well.

This past fall, President Clinton, Prime Minister Netanyahu, and Chairman Arafat met at the Wye River Plantation and reaffirmed the importance of maintaining a peace in the Middle East. The agreement struck at the Wye Plantation in October underscored the fact that both Israel and Palestine have to work together to form an enduring peace.

If Palestine unilaterally were to declare itself an independent state it could jeopardize the foundation upon which the Oslo Accords, the

Hebron Agreement, and the Wye Agreement were built. Mr. Speaker, it is imperative that any changes regarding "statehood" are done through the negotiating process, as stated in H. Con. Res. 24.

It is my hope that a lasting peace will soon be attained in the Middle East. Again, I urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, we have no further requests of time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. STEARNS). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 24.

The question was taken.

Mr. SALMON. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

FEDERAL MARITIME COMMISSION AUTHORIZATION ACT OF 1999

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 104 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 104

Resolved, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 819) to authorize appropriations for the Federal Maritime Commission for fiscal years 2000 and 2001. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. The bill shall be considered as read. During consideration of the bill for amendment, the chairman of the Committee of the Whole may accord priority in recognition on the basis of whether the Member offering an amendment has caused it to be printed in the portion of the Congressional Record designated for that purpose in clause 8 of rule XVIII. Amendments so printed shall be considered as read. The chairman of the Committee of the Whole may: (1) postpone until a time during further consideration in the Committee of the Whole a request for a recorded vote on any amendment; and (2) reduce to five minutes the minimum time for electronic voting on any postponed question that follows another electronic vote without intervening business, provided that the minimum time for electronic voting on the first in any series of questions shall be 15 minutes. At the conclusion of consideration of the bill for amendment the Committee shall rise and report the bill to the House with such amendments as may have been adopted. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

□ 1345

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. STEARNS). The gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. MYRICK) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, for purposes of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MOAKLEY), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday the Committee on Rules met and granted an open rule for H.R. 81, the Federal Maritime Commission Authorization Act. The rule provides for 1 hour of general debate equally divided between the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

The rule provides that the bill shall be open for amendment at any point and authorizes the Chair to accord priority in recognition to Members who have preprinted their amendments in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

The rule allows the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole to postpone votes during consideration of the bill, and to reduce votes to 5 minutes on a postponed question if the vote follows a 15-minute vote.

Finally, the rule provides for one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

Mr. Speaker, H. Res. 104 is an open rule for a good, noncontroversial bill. The Federal Maritime Commission Authorization Act allocates \$15.7 million for the Federal Maritime Commission in 2000 and \$16.3 million for the Commission in 2001, an increase of approximately \$1 million.

Because the Commission ably protects United States shippers and carriers, including Sea-Land Service of Charlotte, North Carolina, from the unfair trade practices of foreign governments and flag carriers, the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure reported a bill that makes no changes to the duties of the Commission. I urge my colleagues to support this open rule and to support the underlying legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MOAKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, my dear friend, the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. MYRICK), for yielding me the customary half-hour, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, like every other Member of this House, I am a big fan of the Federal Maritime Commission. It protects United States shippers from the restrictive rules of foreign governments and from the unfair practices of foreign flagged carriers. It investigates complaints and helps keep shippers in compliance with the Shipping Act of 1984. It also monitors tariffs to make sure they are reasonable.

In short, Mr. Speaker, the Federal Maritime Commission keeps order on