We have in the Congress permitted our Presidents too much leeway in waging war.

This was an effort today to restore that responsibility to the House. It was done sloppily, but considering the alternative of doing nothing, this was much better.

So I am very pleased with what happened today. I am disappointed that there was such strong feelings about the outcome. But I suspect they were not unhappy with the process as much as they were unhappy with not winning the votes.

But nevertheless the votes were very important today. One of the most significant, if not the most significant: we on this House floor today voted up and down on a war resolution. This is not done very often and under the circumstances that exist today, probably the first time.

But that was an easy vote. The House overwhelmingly voted not to go to war. This makes a lot of sense. This is a very good vote. Why should we go to war against a country that has not aggressed against us?

So this was normal and natural and a very good vote. The problem comes with the other votes because they do not follow a consistent pattern.

I think there are too many Members in this House who have enjoyed the fact that they have delivered the responsibility to the President. They do not want war, but they want war. They do not want a legal war, they want an illegal war. They do not want a war to win, they want a war that is a half of a war. They want the President to do the dirty work, but they do not want the Congress to stand up and decide one way or the other.

Today we saw evidence that the Congress was willing to stand up to some degree and vote on this and take some responsibility. For this reason I am pleased with what happened. So voting against the war that has no significant national security interest makes a lot of sense to me.

Another vote, the vote to withhold ground troops unless Congress authorizes the funding for this; this is not micromanaging anything. This is just the Congress standing up and accepting their responsibilities. So this in many ways was very good. This means that the people in this country, as they send their messages to the Members of Congress, are saying that this war does not make a whole lot of sense. If the people of this country were frightened, if they felt like they were being attacked, if they felt like their liberties were threatened, believe me the vote would have been a lot different.

But I am very pleased that this House stood up and said:

Mr. President, you have overstepped your bounds already. Slow up. Do not get this notion that you should send in ground troops. It makes no sense to this House.

Now the interesting thing is that was a resolution, it was a House Resolution, that probably really does not have much effect other than a public relation effect because it would have to be passed by the Senate, it would be vetoed by the President, we would have to override his veto. So, in the practical legislative sense it does not mean a whole lot, but it means something in the fact that we brought it to the floor and we were required to vote on it.

Another resolution that was defeated unfortunately, and it was defeated by a two-to-one margin; this would have said that the President would have to cease, we should have told him to cease, because we have not given him the right to wage war. As a matter of fact, even today we said there will be no war, there will be no declaration of war, so we should consistently follow up and say what we should do is withdraw and not fight a war.

Likewise, when we come to the endorsement of the military bombing, fortunately it went down narrowly. But it in itself, too, does not have any legal effect. That is a House Concurrent Resolution that has no effect of law other than the public relations effect of what the Congress is saying.

But I think it is a powerful message that the American people have spoke through this House of Representatives today to not rubber stamp an illegal, unconstitutional and immoral war. The only moral war is a war that is fought in self-defense. Some claim that this is a moral war because there are people who have been injured. But that is not enough justification. The moral and constitutional war has to be fought in self-defense.

LET US PURSUE A DIPLOMATIC SOLUTION ASAP TO END THE SITUATION IN KOSOVO

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. WHITFIELD) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WHITFIELD. Mr. Speaker, this evening the House had an emotionally charged debate about our policy in Kosovo, and contrary to remarks made after the vote, this was not a vote against the troops. This was a vote against the policy of this administration. All of us support the troops and the young men and women who are doing their duty.

But I think it is also sad. I understand that people become so emotionally charged that, if they lose, they automatically say this was a partisan vote, and I understand that. But I think it is important to remember that these are very serious issues, and all of us have very strong feelings about them, and we may not all agree with the views of others.

But I think, as we debate U.S. involvement in Kosovo, it is important to remember that there has been political and religious turmoil in Kosovo since at least 1389. The Muslim forces of the Ottoman Empire defeated Serb forces on the plains of Kosovo at a place called the Field of Black Birds, and Kosovo has been a sacred place for Muslims and Orthodox Serbs for generations. It is unimaginable really that either group would ever be forced to leave a place they consider their homeland.

Now today in the New York Times and other national magazines our military commanders of NATO acknowledged that 5 weeks of intensive bombing has failed to reduce the size of the Serbian forces in Kosovo or in their operations against Albanians. The 4,423 bombing sorties may have rendered Serb air defenses ineffective, but air strikes have not accomplished the stated purpose, to stop the ethnic cleansing of the Kosovars. However innocent civilians in Belgrade, in Kosovo and other locations throughout Serbia and Yugoslavia have been killed by NATO air strikes, and the number of civilian casualties and incidents of misdirected weapons continues to increase. Relentless bombing has become ineffective, and the more it continues, the more innocent civilians are going to be killed and injured in Kosovo and in Serbia, and certainly a military action in which the only victims are civilians will not be long supported by the world community.

Now I do not think we should mislead the American people. We already are in a quagmire in Yugoslavia, and there is no easy way out, and it is very complex.

But in my view, and the reason that I have voted against the resolution this evening, because we have all sat by and we have watched these relentless air strikes that are totally destroying the infrastructure of Yugoslavia, and in the near future they are going to be coming back to America to help rebuild the country; but the reason I voted against the resolution tonight giving the President authority to continue these air strikes is because I believe that at this point America only has two options. One is an all-out ground war with air support to recapture Kosovo.

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Now, this option would require over 75,000 ground troops, casualties would be inevitable, and troop presence would be essential to protect Kosovars for a long time once the war was completed.

The other option is a diplomatic solution. The goal of NATO should be to return the Kosovars to Kosovo. A military presence will be required to assure their safety, and, of course, Serbian forces must be removed. Now, there have been some indications recently that Mr. Milosevic may accept and be willing and required to accept the presence of foreign troops in Kosovo. In fact, he alluded to that in a recent interview with C-SPAN.

So I think that we have a real opportunity here through the Russians, through our NATO allies, through others that have contacts with Mr. Milosevic, to push this opportunity. I

hope the President and his advisers will pursue a diplomatic solution as soon as possible to end this situation.

INPUT FROM CONSTITUENTS ON ISSUES OF CONCERN TO AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WAMP). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. SCHAFFER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. SHAFFER. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the chance to be recognized tonight in this special order. This special order is one that I hold for a number of members of the majority. I know there are some who are monitoring tonight's special order, and, for those who have something they would like to add to this hour, I would invite them to the floor now.

Mr. Speaker, being from Colorado, I want to take the opportunity to discuss just briefly before I move on to my other remarks once again the tragedy that took place a week ago yesterday in Colorado, and just express for the people of Colorado our profound gratitude for all of those throughout the country who have expressed their support, their concern, who have supported us through prayer and in so many other ways.

It is a tragedy that has really gripped our state, as it has the whole Nation, and it is encouraging for all of us in this time when we need a lot of courage and strength to know the rest of the country stands with us as a State and thinks daily about the families and the victims and all of those involved, young children, not only in Colorado but throughout the country, that are trying to make sense of a situation where I am afraid there is no logical conclusion that can be drawn as to what allows this kind of thing to occur in America.

Nonetheless, it has, and a great Nation such as ours will emerge from such a tragedy stronger in the long run, I am fundamentally convinced of that, and I believe that is possible because of the strength and support and the prayer of all those who have given considerable thought to our State in the last few days.

This is a topic that also emerged, Mr. Speaker, at a town meeting that I had last week. I go home to Colorado every weekend and visit with constituents and hold town meetings as often and as frequently as I can. The Fourth Congressional District of Colorado, which I represent, is a very large one. It represents approximately half of the State of Colorado, the eastern plains, and 21 counties in scope. So I use the opportunity of the weekends to get back home and talk to as many constituents as I possibly can.

I have a standing town meeting every Monday morning halfway between Fort Collins and Loveland, Colorado. Monday morning is a breakfast meeting. Naturally, the focus and concern expressed from the audience there was about the shootings in Littleton and the tragedy at Columbine High School. A number of suggestions and solutions and theories were suggested, of course, but, once again, just the feeling of helplessness, the feeling of just devastation in the wake of something so tragic as the death of so many young people and their teacher is something that we will never, ever forget.

Another topic that comes up at the town meetings frequently is the issue that was at the heart of the debate that took place on the floor today, and that is of the U.S. involvement in Kosovo. I have to say I have run across in the last three weeks one constituent in my district who believes the President has acted properly in committing our armed services and our armed forces to carry out his war in Kosovo, that out of literally thousands of constituents that I have had a chance to meet with over the last three weeks.

The concern of those that I represent is certainly for the troops and is certainly for the most positive outcome we can possibly salvage from the operation in Kosovo, but their paramount concern is for the integrity of our Constitution.

There are many interpretations, I suppose, that can be made of the votes that took place here. Some of our colleagues on the opposite side of the aisle were seen not too long ago flailing their arms and speaking in elevated voices about their disappointment with the outcome of today's votes.

Some believe that the Congress, standing up for the Constitution, is an embarrassment. I would disagree entirely. He think that when our great founders 223 years ago, not just in launching a great country through the Declaration of Independence, but a few years later constructing a Constitution, were correct in suggesting that the authority to declare war should reside within the Congress, this House, as well as the other body, and should not be a function, certainly not a unilateral function, of the chief executive.

There are those today that disagree with that premise, and, after a month and a half of debate and deliberation, this Congress spoke forcefully and reasserted its authority and its constitutional role in deploying troops around the world and expressing its opinion about the constitutional basis for warfare.

One of the things I do in my district, Mr. Speaker, is ask for a lot of opinions. I ask people to write letters. I ask people to attend these town meetings that I hold. I ask people to fill out public opinion surveys that I distribute throughout my district and at these town meetings, and I want to share with you and the other Members tonight some of the results of some of those public opinion surveys. I want to go through some of the responses that I have heard from many people, because it really deals with those first two topics that I addressed at the start of this special order.

One of the questions that I asked in this survey, I asked 8 questions, and some of them rather open-ended. I asked, number one, what is the single most important issue facing the country today? Number two, I asked what is the single most important issue to you or your family? It is remarkable to see some of the responses that came in in response in answering this survey.

The number of times that the issue of morality and our national integrity came up was just astounding. It comes up as the number one issue more often than I would expect it, until you read the full descriptions of people's concerns, and then it becomes more apparent.

Here is one that I want to share. Again, what is the single most important issue facing our country today? Morality and the deficient educational system is the answer. Lack of old fashioned basic educational skills.

Please tell me why, this writer asks, and this writer is from Fort Collins, Colorado, please tell me why our children are cheated out of learning the very exciting history of our great country. This is the greatest country ever conceived, and we do not even teach these children why it is the greatest. They are kept completely in the dark. They are not taught that this is a constitutional republic instead of a democracy, the writer says. They learn nothing about the Founding Fathers, the greatest thinkers of all time. They know nothing about the Revolutionary War that was fought for 6 years to give the American people liberty and the pursuit of happiness. They know nothing about the suffering that the soldiers went through to save this country for liberty. Every other civilized country in the world teaches their children the country's history but ours. Instead, our children are taught socialism. It isn't until we are out of school that we realize how little we know, but it takes years for us to figure out why we have been taught so little.

Here is another writer who writes about his experience in Vietnam and talks about our history as a country and what we stand for as a Nation, why soldiers are deployed around the world and for what purpose. He speaks about getting back to a constitutional framework from which we exercise public policy.

Here is one that wrote about taxes as the number one issue.

We recently finished our kids tax forms for 1998. One of our children is 22 years old and has lived at home half of the year. The other is 19 and has lived at home for the full year. They both attend college full-time and work. They also have the maximum tax withheld from their paychecks. The 22-year-old had to pay in $89 and the 19-year-old had to pay in $181. We feel if government wants to help these kids, quit taxing them so much. College is so expensive, and then to tax them so much is truly unfair.