Now, as threats to international peace and security continue to evolve, the Constitutional War Powers Resolution, H.J. Res. 53, rededicates Congress to its primary constitutional role of deciding when to use force abroad.

In 1793, James Madison said, '' . . . The power to declare war, including the power of judging the causes of war, is fully and exclusively vested in the legislature . . . the executive has no right, in any case, to decide the question, whether there is or is not cause for declaring war.''

The Framers of our Constitution sought to decentralize the war powers of the United States and construct a balance between the political branches.

□ 1945

The War Powers Resolution of 1973 aimed to clarify the intent of the constitutional Framers and to ensure that Congress and the President share in the decision-making process in the event of armed conflict. Yet, since the enactment of the resolution, time and again Presidents have maintained that the resolution's consultation, reporting, and congressional authorization requirements are unconstitutional obstacles to executive authority.

By more fully clarifying the war powers of the President and the Congress, the legislation I've introduced, H.J. Res. 53, the Constitutional War Powers Resolution, improves upon the War Powers Resolution of 1973 in a number of ways. It clearly spells out the powers that the Congress and the President must exercise collectively, as well as the defensive measures the Commander in Chief may exercise without congressional approval. It also provides a more robust reporting requirement that would enable Congress to be more informed and to have greater oversight. And it protects and preserves the checks and balances the Framers intended in the decision to bring our Nation into war.

Madam Speaker, I look forward to congressional hearings on this critical issue. The time for Congress to meet its constitutional duty is long overdue.

And with that, Madam Speaker, I would like to ask God to continue to bless our men and women in Afghanistan and Iraq, and to ask God to continue to bless the families of our men and women in uniform.

ECONOMIC ISOLATIONISM

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

Mr. DREIER. Madam Speaker, as the two Democratic contenders duke it out in the Presidential campaign, there's one issue that they both seem very eager to be identified with. And it's very unfortunate, it's the issue of economic isolationism. This kind of policy is as dangerous as it is inconsistent with their own rhetoric.

Both Democratic contenders like to talk about the need to enhance our Nation's image and increase our leadership in the international community. They talk about diplomacy and soft power, and then they turn around and insist we try to withdraw from the worldwide marketplace and cede our global economic leadership. It has even been suggested by them that we go back on a 14-year deal with our two closest neighbors, including our neighbor to the north who has been such a key political ally.

Perhaps this outlandish rhetoric is delivered with a wink and a nod. Perhaps it's merely an attempt to score a few political points without any intention to actually dismantle the deep economic and political ties that we share with our trading partners in this hemisphere. Frankly, I hope that that is the case. But either way, Madam Speaker, this is very dangerous rhetoric.

NAFTA has long been addressed by those running for office as though it were an unmitigated disaster; no one seems to want to touch it with a 10-foot pole. After all, everyone knows that NAFTA has hurt our economy and cost us millions of jobs. Right? Wrong. In 1994, when Bill Clinton sent NAFTA to the Congress, the gross domestic product in this country was $6.9 trillion. Today, we have a $14.1 trillion economy. In other words, we have more than doubled the size of our economy in the NAFTA-era. When adjusted for inflation, the numbers are still very striking, with 50 percent growth since 1994. During the same period, 25 million jobs have been created, while our labor force has grown by 18 million.

Fourteen years of NAFTA have seen our economy grow considerably while more Americans are working than ever before and new jobs have abounded. To put it bluntly, anyone who says that NAFTA has destroyed our economy is flat out wrong. Not only has the predicted ''giant sucking sound'' that we heard about during the NAFTA debate not come to pass, but the precise opposite has taken place.

But, Madam Speaker, NAFTA is just one component of the complex relationships that entail our global engagement, where the economic and the political are inextricably entwined, and nowhere is this role more critical than in our own neighborhood. We have spent years and countless resources promoting democracy in this hemisphere. The rise of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela and his cohorts throughout the region have demonstrated that authoritarianism in our backyard is still a reality. As he sends troops to the border he shares with our friend and ally, Colombia, we are reminded that tyranny in our hemisphere still poses very grave threats.

NAFTA, CAFTA, the Peru Free Trade Agreement, and the proposed agreements with Colombia and Panama build upon the twin pillars of liberty: democratic governments and free markets. They enhance our economic strength with new opportunities and give us greater leverage to ensure that we have peaceful and prosperous neighbors. And we know that peace and prosperity, Madam Speaker, go hand in hand.

We simply cannot disengage economically without disengaging politically. Engagement through trade is our source of strength and our leadership, and we would disengage to our peril. Those who regard our leadership in the international community so casually that they would trash it for political gain threaten not only our own prosperity, but our ability to play a positive role in this hemisphere and around the globe as we seek to grow our economies and to grow the economies of our neighbors.

U.S.-COLOMBIA TRADE PROMOTION AGREEMENT

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

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Madam Speaker, I rise to support the U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement, to urge the Speaker of this House to bring the U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement to this House floor for a vote.

And let me tell you this: this agreement is good for the State that I represent. It's good for Colombia. It's good for the United States. It's good for Illinois farmers. It's good for Illinois workers. And it's good for Illinois manufacturing.

And I would note that in my district I have 8,000 Caterpillar workers, union Caterpillar workers who are manufacturing workers. And under this agreement, I note under the U.S.-Colombia Trade Agreement that our machinery exports see their tariffs imposed on Illinois-made construction equipment eliminated on day one. Now, you think about it, mining equipment used in Colombia is $1 million equipment, that's a $100,000 tax on U.S.-made products eliminated on day one.

Currently, Illinois exports $214 million to Colombia, and that's just the beginning. According to the International Trade Commission, Illinois is a big winner. Pork products will increase 72 percent, according to their economic analysis. Corn and soybeans will see increased sales to Colombia. Fabricated metal products, processed foods, and chemicals will all see increases. And, again, it's expected that machinery, manufactured machinery, like products made by John Deere and Navistar and Caterpillar, will increase 15 percent.

Agriculture. The leaders of agriculture will tell you the U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement is the best for agriculture in the history of all trade negotiations. And let's not forget that 80 percent of U.S. exports are currently taxed when they enter Colombia, and they will become duty free immediately. That will allow us to

become competitive with China and Asia and other competition.

We know Colombia, a democracy, as a reliable partner and ally. We know that Colombia is the oldest democracy in Latin America. And we also recognize that President Uribe of Colombia is our hemisphere's most popular elected official with over 80 percent approval ratings. Compare that to this Congress, which has a 15 percent approval rating. Big difference.

Now, there are those who oppose the U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement. They say that Colombia, amongst all the good things it's done, just hasn't done enough regarding violence against labor leaders. Let's remember that Colombia has had 40 years of civil strife driven by left-wing gorillas trying to overthrow the democratically elected government of Colombia. But today, 71 percent of Colombians say they feel more secure under President Uribe; 73 percent say Uribe respects human rights. Those are Colombians, not Americans, saying that.

Homicides are down 40 percent in Colombia; kidnappings are down 76 percent. The murder rate today in Medellin, once the poster child of violence in Colombia, one of the most dangerous cities on the planet, today has a lower murder rate than Washington, DC, or Baltimore.

But let's look at the facts on labor violence. President Uribe has made major changes, beginning with reforming the judiciary. He has had hired 418 new prosecutors, 545 new investigators. In fact, in the Prosecutor General's Office, responsible for targeting those who are responsible for the violence in Colombia, they've added over 2,000 new posts.

Funding has gone up 75 percent in the last few years alone under President Uribe. And quoting Carlos Rodriguez, president of the United Workers Confederation, a labor leader in Colombia: ''Never in the history of Colombia have we achieved something so important.'' Again, that's a Colombian labor leader.

President Uribe and Colombia, under the government initiatives, have worked to protect labor leaders, giving them special protections. Last year, they spent over $38 million for body guard protection for labor union leaders; 1,500 union members and activists received special protection, the second largest protected group in Colombia, and it's been successful. For labor activists under this program, none have lost their lives. And I would note that the murder rate today for labor unionists is lower than the national murder rate for everyone else.

So progress has been made.

And I would note that crimes categorized as anti-union violence often are not union related, but regular crime that everyone in Colombia has contended with, many are the responsibility of the leftist FARC.

I would note that the International Labor Organization has removed Colombia from its labor watch list. Colombia has agreed to a permanent ILO representative in Colombia. And perhaps most telling, 14 Colombian labor leaders have given their support to the trade agreement.

The bottom line is, ladies and gentlemen, this agreement is good for Illinois workers, it's good for Illinois manufacturers, it's good for Illinois farmers. Let's bring it up for a vote. I ask my colleagues to support this important trade agreement. And I will also include for the RECORD a copy of an ''Economist'' article talking about President Hugo Chavez and the FARC and their opposition to this agreement.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC. March 10, 2008.

DEAR COLLEAGUE: Please read this informative recent article from The Economist about FARC narcoterrorists in Colombia and troubling links with the Chavez administration in Venezuela. As noted below, ''Mr. Chavez, still with oil money but politically on the defensive, may have thrown in his lot with an outlaw army of drug-traffickers.''

Now more than ever we must support the pending Trade Promotion Agreement with our neighbor and friend Colombia.

Sincerely,

JERRY WELLER,
Member of Congress.

(From The Economist, Mar. 6, 2008)

COLOMBIA IS MOVING CLOSER TO BREAKING THE FARC—UNLESS VENEZUELA STOPS IT

On few, if any, other occasions has a head of state issued detailed orders for military mobilization as jauntily as if he were ordering pizza, and on live television. That is what Hugo Chavez, Venezuela's president, did on March 2nd, after Colombian forces bombed a camp just inside Ecuador, killing Raul Reyes, a senior commander of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) guerrillas.

''Minister of defence!'' bellowed Mr. Chavez, on ''ALo PRESIDENTE'' (''Hello President''), his weekly radio and television programme. ''Send me ten battalions to the border, including tanks.'' He also ordered the forward deployment of his new Russian fighter-bombers, threatening that if Colombia's president, Alvaro Uribe, tried a similar raid on Venezuelan soil he would ''send over the Sukhois''. The next day he broke diplomatic ties with Colombia.

Venezuelan troops and tanks duly moved to the more populated points of the long border between the two countries. Customs officials halted Colombian trucks at the busiest crossing point, between Cucuta and San Cristobal.

What made this performance odd was that it was Ecuador, not Venezuela, whose sovereignty had been violated. True, Colombia has often accused Venezuela of harbouring guerrilla leaders and tolerating camps near the border similar to the one bombed in Ecuador. But did Venezuela's president have a guilty conscience?

''Maybe he knew what was coming,'' wrote Teodoro Petkoff, a guerrilla leader in the 1960s who now edits an opposition newspaper in Caracas. Mr. Chavez's apparent over-reaction was a pre-emptive attempt to ''throw a veil over the revelations he suspected might come from Raul Reyes' computer,'' suggested Mr Petkoff.

With Ecuador's president, Rafael Correa, following Mr. Chavez's lead, this week's events sent Latin America's diplomats scurrying to prevent war enveloping the neighbourhood. But they also laid bare that Colombia's government is coming close to breaking the back of the FARC, and in the process threatening to shine light on its murky relations with neighbouring governments.

When Mr. Uribe took office in 2002, the guerrillas were rampant. His predecessor had just halted peace negotiations because the FARC had used a ''demilitarised'' zone created to host the talks as a base for recruitment and for kidnapping (many of the politicians it has held hostage were seized during the talks). The guerrillas had some 17,000 troops; they blocked main roads and bombarded small towns, kidnapping and killing almost at will. To make matters worse, the state's inability to provide security had spawned murderous right-wing paramilitary groups.

Mr. Uribe's ''democratic security'' policy has achieved a dramatic change. By expanding the security forces, he has driven the FARC from populated areas, while persuading most of the paramilitaries to demobilize. Officials reckon they have reduced the FARC's ranks to fewer than 11,000. But the guerrillas withdrew to the vast tropical lowlands, to areas they have controlled for 40 years. There they resisted a two-year offensive by 18,000 troops. The army could not get near the FARC's seven-man governing secretariat, of which Mr. Reyes (the NOM DE GUERRE of Luis Edgar Devia) was a member.

SEEKING THE SECRETARIAT

Thwarted, the security forces refined their strategy. They put more effort into seeking the FARC's leaders using information from guerrilla deserters and infiltrators, and from sophisticated bugging equipment provided by the United States. Over the past year, this has started to pay off. Two FARC regional commanders have been killed and one captured. In January and February alone, the army claims to have killed 247 guerrillas and captured 226, with another 360 deserting. This pressure has pushed FARC units to the borders with Ecuador, Venezuela and Panama.

Last month the government received a tip-off that Mr. Reyes was in a camp less than two kilometers (1.25 miles) inside Ecuador. Mr. Uribe authorized a bombing raid by Brazilian-made Super Tucano aircraft, which killed at least 21 guerrillas. Colombian troops then crossed the border to recover Mr. Reyes's corpse—and his laptop computers. (They left three wounded women guerrillas unattended.)

Most Colombians were jubilant that the government had struck at the very top of the FARC at last. Mr. Reyes handled the guerrillas' relations with the outside world; he was one of three deputies to Manuel Marulanda, the FARC's elderly leader. For the first time the security forces have shown that they are capable of infiltrating and defeating the guerrillas tough systematic strikes, said Roman Ortiz of Fundacion Ideas para la Paz, a Bogota think-tank.

Mr. Uribe doubtless thought that Mr. Correa could be mollified over the cross-border raid. But spurred on by Mr. Chavez, Ecuador's president sent 3,200 troops to the border and cut diplomatic ties. He demanded an emergency meeting of the Organization of American States (OAS) to condemn Colombia, and set off on a tour of regional capitals seeking support.

THE LAPTOP LODE

Almost as important as the killing of Mr. Reyes may be the capture of his laptops. Apart from inside information on the FARC, according to Colombian offIcials, they contain documents which—if true—are embarrassing to Mr. Correa but highly damaging to Mr. Chavez. As the FARC's top negotiator,

Mr. Reyes appears to have met representatives of many governments. According to one e-mail, he met Gustavo Larrea, Mr. Correa's security minister last month. Mr. Larrea is alleged to have proposed a formal meeting in Quito to discuss securing the border and negotiating the release of some of the FARC's 700-odd hostages. Mr. Larrea said that Colombian offIcials knew of his meeting, which was purely to talk about the hostages.

Ecuadorean officials having swapped complaints with their Colombian counterparts about their mutual inability to prevent the FARC from crossing the border. Ecuador claims to spend $160m a year containing the spillover. It is also angry about Colombia spraying coca fields on the border with weedkiller, which it says drifts south on to other crops.

Nevertheless, Ecuador has given some help to Colombia. Mr. Correa claimed that last year his forces dismantled 47 FARC camps inside Ecuador and on three occasions carried out joint operations with Colombian troops. American surveillance aircraft still patrol over Colombia from an air base in Ecuador, although Mr. Correa has promised not to renew the lease for this when it expires in 2009.

By contrast, Mr. Chavez has recently been unambiguous in his support for the FARC. He fell out with Mr. Uribe last year over his attempt to act as a mediator for the hostages. Since then he has cast aside his previous stance as an honest broker seeking a peaceful solution to Colombia's internal conflict. When the FARC turned over two hostages to him in January, Mr. Chavez hailed the guerrillas as a ''true army'' whose status as belligerents should be recognised. No other government in the region, not even Cuba's, echoed this call. On ''ALo PRESIDENTE'' Mr. Chavez held a minute's silence in honor of Mr. Reyes, whom he said he had met three times over the years. He declared that Colombia needed to be ''liberated'' from its ''subservience'' to the United States.

Another document allegedly on Mr. Reyes's computer showed that Mr. Chavez paid (or planned to pay) the FARC $300m. An (unrelated) e-mail to Mr. Reyes suggested that the FARC were trying to obtain uranium for a ''dirty bomb''. All this prompted some far-fetched exchanges. Mr. Uribe said that he would denounce Mr. Chavez for ''financing genocide''; in return, Venezuela accused Colombia's police chief, who revealed the contents of Mr. Reyes's laptop, of being a ''drug trafficker''.

''This is * * * a microphone war,'' said General Raul Salazar, a former defense minister. Like many other Venezuelans, he doubts that it will become a real one. That is not least because many army officers do not want war with Colombia and find Mr. Chavez's actions an ''embarrassment'', said another former defense minister, General Raul Baduel, who is now a prominent opponent of the president.

So what is Mr. Chavez's game? One possible answer is his obsessive search for an external enemy to shore up his waning popularity at home. In December, his political blueprint for a socialist Venezuela, with indefinite presidential re-election, was defeated in a referendum. This came only a year after he won a second six-year term with 63 percent of the vote, and was the first time he had lost a national vote.

In November Venezuelans are due to vote for mayors and state governors. They are increasingly discontented about crime, an inflation rate that has surged to 25 percent and shortages of basic goods, including food and cooking gas. Because of Mr. Chávez's mismanagement of agriculture, Venezuela imports much of its food from Colombia. Any lasting interruption of trade would hurt both countries. Reputable pollsters say that Mr. Chávez's popularity has fallen well below 50 percent. Visible faction fights have broken out in his newly formed Unified Socialist Party of Venezuela.

Picking a fight with Colombia and supporting the FARC are unlikely to win him friends. One poll, by Hinterlaces, showed 89 percent opposed to a war and 87 percent opposed to the FARC. So the reason for his military mobilization may be to deter Colombia from moving against the FARC camps in Venezuela where some Colombian officials believe that Mr. Marulanda is based. A more worrying, though improbable, hypothesis is that Mr. Chávez, a former army officer, is throwing off all pretence at being a civilian democrat and, fearing that he may not remain in power for long, wants to launch an assault on what he sees as American imperialism and its regional stooge, Mr. Uribe.

Although George Bush gave public support to Mr. Uribe, other governments in the region, led by Brazil, tried to drive a wedge between Mr. Correa and Mr. Chávez. There were signs that this might work. On March 5th Ecuador agreed to an OAS resolution criticizing, but not formally condemning, Colombia. The OAS also agreed to investigate the bombing. Once the region's diplomats have patched things up between these two countries, they face another, more intractable problem: Mr. Chávez, still with oil money but politically on the defensive, may have thrown in his lot with an outlaw army of drug-traffickers.

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

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS MESSAGE HOUR

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Mrs. JONES) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that Members would have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Ohio?

There was no objection

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Madam Speaker, it's befitting that you are in the Speaker's chair today as we discuss this very important hour.

I have the pleasure to manage this hour on behalf of the Congressional Black Caucus. And we're going to be talking about black history and women's history, a combination of last month and this month's themes.

I want to begin by saying that we will have an opportunity to discuss the state of black women in America and pay tribute to African American women in our communities. We felt it befitting, as we recently celebrated Black History Month in February and currently are in the midst of Women's History Month.

Tonight we will begin by highlighting some of the findings from the recent study of ''The State of Black America,'' released by the Urban League, and discussing some of the wonderful women from our own congressional districts.

I would like to begin now by yielding time to my colleague and good friend from the great State of California, DIANE WATSON.

Ms. WATSON. Madam Speaker and my honorable colleague, STEPHANIE TUBBS JONES, thank you for this opportunity to salute our women over a period of time.

I would like now to introduce you to a woman by the name of Mayme Clayton.

Mayme Clayton, a renowned librarian, worked her entire life to assemble a priceless collection of historical artifacts. The collection was assembled over a 40-year period by Mayme A. Clayton, 1923 to 2006, a career librarian at the University of Southern California in my district, and University of California, Los Angeles, my alma mater. And Dr. Clayton's singular commitment to preserve African American culture and history was inspired by her desire to ensure that children would know the richness and diversity of African American contributions to the world.

The Mayme A. Clayton Collection of African American History and Culture is comprised of seven main components. They are as follows: rare and out-of-print books, manuscripts, documents, films, music, photographs, and memorabilia. The collection is a remarkable cultural treasure, with a vast ability to educate and to delight. It is our hope that this particular collection will be explored on the Web site to learn more about the collection and why Dr. Mayme Clayton assembled it, and the goals of the Western States Black Research and Educational Center.

It's a research center, and it's scheduled to receive a Federal grant to refurbish its facilities that are located in my district, Culver City, California. The center will be known as the Mayme Clayton Library, and it has housed the largest collection of rare books, films, recordings, and other documents on black Americans outside of the Schomburg Library.