

Madam Speaker, I will be voting today for H.R. 4133 because I agree with its two basic premises. The alliance between the United States and Israel, including military support, is of critical importance. And we must prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons capability.

I cast this vote, however, with serious reservations about both the bill's timing and its content. There is no question that a nuclear-capable Iran poses a grave threat not only to Israel, but to the United States and other nations. We must ensure that we have every tool available at our disposal to dissuade if possible and prevent if necessary the Iranian regime from developing nuclear weapons or the capability to produce such weapons from stockpiled materials and components.

Among these vital tools are a combination of diplomatic and economic mechanisms of the sort that I have frequently supported in the past--including the Iran Threat Reduction Act, which also passed with overwhelming bipartisan support earlier in this Congress--that have often exerted effective pressures on Iran, hindering and deterring the development of nuclear capabilities. Military attacks on Iranian facilities by American or Israeli forces must be regarded as absolutely a last resort, fraught with potentially disastrous consequences, some quite predictable, some not yet imagined.

Yet this bill gives little weight or emphasis to critical diplomatic and economic measures and at points comes perilously close to signaling intent or support for the military option. In fact, the timing of this legislation risks being interpreted as a vote of "no-confidence" in our ongoing efforts to engage diplomatically with Iran. Developments such as the so-called "P5+1" meetings between the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, Germany, and Iran--the next meeting of which is scheduled to be held in Baghdad two weeks from today--are critically important steps toward renewed engagement, with a lengthened roster of partners and a tighter sanctions regime. One can hope that the resolve expressed in H.R. 4133 might strengthen these efforts, but I fear that the bill's timing and some of its provisions may also threaten their devaluation.