Terrorism is terrorism, and those of us who think that terrorism is only over there are certainly kidding themselves. Terrorism is everywhere, and the only way to stomp out terrorism is to show a resolve and to get the job done by defeating terrorists. That is precisely what Israel is trying to do.

Let us remember who started this war. Israel pulled out of Lebanon 6 years ago, so there is no pretext of any occupation. There is no pretext of anything other than the fact that terrorists would like to destroy democratic societies such as Israel, and Israel remains the only democracy in the Middle East.

These terrorists want to destroy the democratic way of life, not only in Israel, but in America and all other democracies of the world. That is why Israel's fight is the fight of all decent nations, including the United States of America.

These terrorists want to destroy life. Israel is standing up to them and saying enough is enough. We should let Israel finish the job.

Israel wants to knock out the terrorist group Hezbollah for good, so they can never return to south Lebanon and threaten Israel's communities from the south of Lebanon on the northern border with Israel. We should let them do that because the status quo is not acceptable. We have already heard words from the naysayers telling Israel to use restraint.

Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that we can use restraint, or that Israel can use restraint, or that any country can use restraint towards terrorists that are out to kill them and us. We should let Israel finish the job.

Let us remember how this started. The terrorists came down from Lebanon, raided Israel, went on Israeli territory, killed Israeli soldiers, captured a couple of them, took them across the border. That is how it started.

Imagine if this had happened to us, if someone came from the Mexican border or the Canadian border, attacked U.S. soldiers on U.S. soil, killed some of them and then took them back over the border.

Mr. Speaker, we would be just as outraged, and we would have every right to go after those terrorists. That is what Israel is going to do.

Hezbollah is a terrorist organization. It is fighting a proxy war for Iran and Syria. Iran and Syria lurk behind this. Iran and Syria are the biggest supporters of terrorism.

A couple of years ago, this Congress passed and the President signed the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act. I wrote that act. I was the lead sponsor of that act, along with my good friend, Congresswoman ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN. That act slapped sanctions on Syria for the first time in history.

President Bush has only implemented some of the sanctions in that act, and I call on the President to now implement all of the sanctions on the act. Now is the time. Now we have to show Syria and other countries that support terrorists that we are resolved to defeat terrorism.

I was very happy when the United States vetoed the one-sided resolution at the United Nations, once again condemning Israel, once again discrediting the United Nations. The United States needs to be steadfast in support, and this Congress needs to do so as well.

So in conclusion, let me say I look forward to a resolution later on in this week. The United States needs to stand by its friend, Israel, and Israel needs to stand by its friend, the United States, and all peace-loving and democratic nations in the world ought to stand shoulder to shoulder firmly against terrorism. Because if terrorism is not contained in one area of the world, it surely will come to every other area of the world.

THE U.S.-OMAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. ENGLISH) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, tonight we rise at a time when people all over the world are watching the Middle East, are watching the bombs that have lit up both Israel and Lebanon, are watching the troop movements and are hoping earnestly for peace.

□ 2015

Certainly the support of Israel is going to be loudly and consistently articulated in this Chamber this week, but we also have an opportunity to do something substantive, to improve our engagement with the Middle East in the coming week.

This week, we have an opportunity to vote on a substantive agreement which will bring one of the nations of the Middle East closer to the United States, promote economic opportunity and integration in the region, and lay the groundwork, in my view, for closer ties between the United States and some of our key partners in the Middle East and one in particular.

With that in mind, Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight as cochairman of the Middle East Economic Partnership Caucus, and I expect to be joined by a couple of my other cochairmen, to talk tonight about the benefits of the U.S.-Oman Free Trade Agreement, which we expect to be voted on in the House this week.

At a time when there is great instability in the Middle East, at a time when we are concerned on how the Middle East affects our homeland security, at a time when we want to do something positive to create economic opportunities in a region where the lack of them has spawned terrorism, this is a small, but important, opportunity.

The Middle East, we believe, is increasingly becoming economically integrated with the West, and if we want to fight the root causes of terrorism, we should be encouraging that. It is critical that now, more than ever, we encourage this integration to promote closer ties, democracy and social liberalization through a process of economic interaction and close cooperation.

In recent years, America's dialogue in the Middle East has been deepened by the addition of bilateral and, ultimately, strongly bipartisan free trade agreements, first with Israel, then with Jordan, then with Morocco and, most recently, with Bahrain.

The U.S.-Oman FTA, slated for a vote in the House Chamber this Thursday, largely builds off of the successful model that was set by the U.S.-Bahrain FTA, further supporting openness and stronger ties between the U.S. and the Middle East and the Maghreb regions.

Over the past year, Oman has clearly demonstrated a powerful commitment to this agreement and closer relations with the West, both in terms of its political will and institutional resources, making significant strides in improving its labor practices and opening its markets and being accountable for intellectual property issues and cracking down on intellectual property violations.

In numerous communications with our U.S. trade Representative, Omani leaders have promised to take a number of concrete steps by October 31, 2006, to build on the strong labor reforms already implemented, and in my view, as a member of the Trade Subcommittee who has closely followed this process, Oman has come further than virtually any other country we have ever engaged in this manner in dealing with core labor issues. Their commitment shows Oman's determination to address all concerns, while respecting the rule of law and its legislative processes.

In addition, all of these commitments are fully verifiable because Oman has agreed to have all of them reviewed under the FTA's labor consultation mechanism. The U.S.-Oman Free Trade Agreement provides one of the highest degrees of market access of any U.S. free trade agreement to date and accounts for a substantial market access across Oman's entire services regime.

This agreement will make 100 percent of U.S. imports and exports and consumer and industrial goods duty free on the day the agreement enters into force. It also provides duty free treatment to 87 percent of our agricultural exports from day one. In terms of being accountable for intellectual property rights violations, Oman has agreed to criminal standards for copyright infringement and stronger remedies and penalties. It will increase criminal and civil protection against unlawful encoding of satellite TV signals and criminalize end-use piracy, providing strong

deterrence against piracy and counterfeiting.

This is just a small sample of some of the benefits of the U.S.-Oman FTA, and this agreement is far more important than the small market that Oman would suggest.

We recognize that Oman is a small place. It is probably the equivalent, in terms of purchasing power comparability, of entering into a free trade agreement with our own North Dakota, but it is extremely significant because it is a part of a much larger Middle East puzzle. It is part of a region that we expect, in coming years, to build much closer ties with, and the Oman agreement, as it has been laid out and as their government has agreed to embrace, is a very strong model for going forward with future agreements in this region.

The U.S.-Oman FTA is, after all, a comprehensive and high-standard agreement. High standards are provided for including comprehensive protection for intellectual property rights, government procurement transparency, and trade facilitation. Developing a high-quality FTA with Oman will establish a high standard for all of the other Gulf Cooperation Council Members and set a very high standard for them to meet.

Consequentially, the FTA represents a significant benefit to U.S. trade that extends well beyond those benefits that currently exist in Oman. The FTA establishes a secure, predictable, legal framework for U.S. investors in Oman and includes high-standard legal protection for their model on U.S. legal principles, such as substantive due process and the ability to comment on proposed laws and regulations.

Mr. Speaker, the FTA also creates and expands opportunities for U.S. goods and services. This FTA will broaden and strengthen the bilateral, commercial relationship between the United States and Oman beyond the approximately $748 million generated in two-way trade during 2004. One hundred percent of this bilateral trade in consumer and industrial products will become duty free under this agreement.

The U.S.-Oman FTA will build upon the trade and investment framework agreement signed between our two countries on July 7, 2004, and will spur continued growth of U.S. direct investment which in 2003 was $358 million, a substantial increase over the previous year. In addition, the FTA will increase the competitiveness of U.S. exporters and service providers in the Omani market, providing for an increased market share for U.S. manufacturers and service providers. In 2004, U.S. goods exports were $330 million, up 2.3 percent from 2003.

Oman, in my view, is a likely market for U.S. oil and gas equipment and services, transportation equipment, water and environmental technology, medical equipment, electrical and mechanical equipment, power generation and transmission equipment and services, telecommunications equipment and services, franchising, and U.S. poultry and beef. In each of these areas, we potentially will get a leg up on our foreign competition.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, the FTA will encourage greater political and economic reforms. It is worth remembering that in 1997 Omani laws were enacted guaranteeing Omani women equal rights in both education and employment. Women have the right to vote and run for office in consultation council elections, which are held every 4 years.

In 1992, in an attempt to balance growth on its non-oil sector with concern for its natural resources, Oman developed a national conservation strategy, which was subsequently approved by the Council of Ministers and spells out the need and procedures for incorporating environmental considerations in the development plans.

In 1994, Oman became a member of the International Labor Organization, the ILO, and has satisfied various labor-related accession requirements for membership to the WTO.

In 2003, it is worth noting the government adopted its first comprehensive labor law that allows workers the right of association and to pursue labor disputes in court. That law abolished the 1973 prohibition on the right to strike. This is a radical move in a part of the Arab world where labor rights is increasingly an important movement.

The U.S.-Oman FTA advances modernization programs, implemented by Sultan Qaboos. In accordance with its accession to the WTO in 2000, Oman announced its intention to eliminate mandatory shelf life standards for shelf stable foods and to adopt internationally recognized CODEC standards for the labeling of prepackaged foods.

Additionally, as part of its WTO accession, Oman has adopted derogations to the Gulf Cooperation Council patent law to comply with its obligations under the TRIPS agreement, and has committed itself to begin negotiations to join the WTO agreement on government procurement.

In 2004, Oman removed its temporary ban on imports of U.S. poultry and poultry products, moving ahead of some of our other trading partners.

We need to recognize, Mr. Speaker, this agreement also provides support for an important strategic ally in the war on terrorism. This, I think, is as strong a reason to support this agreement as any.

The United States has maintained relations with the sultanate since the early years of American independence, and that friendship has grown over time. Oman supported the 1979 Camp David Accords and was one of three Arab League states that did not break relations with Egypt after signing the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty in 1979.

In April of 1994, Oman hosted the plenary meeting of the Water Working Group of the peace process, the first gulf state to do so.

Oman occupies a strategic position on the Strait of Hormuz at the entrance to the Persian Gulf. Following the Iranian revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Oman was the very first of the gulf states to formalize defense ties with the U.S. Oman has been a party with the U.S. to a military cooperation agreement since 1980, which was recently renewed in 2000. May I say, Mr. Speaker, when I joined a delegation that went to Oman just a year ago, I was very impressed by the commitment of Sultan Qaboos, as he articulated it to us, to continue and to strengthen this relationship.

It is worth noting that the Oman-U.S. Facilities Access Agreement has provided crucial support to the protection of Kuwaiti tankers in 1987. In 1988, during the Persian Gulf crisis, Oman assisted the U.N. coalition effort. Military bases in Oman were used in 2001 by U.S. coalition forces involved in ground raids against both the Taliban and Afghanistan and against Osama bin Laden.

The U.S.-Oman FTA, in other words, in my view at least, is a key building block toward building a broader set of economic relationships in the Middle East that can encourage economic growth. It is consistent with the 9/11 Commission's observation and recommendation, and here I quote: ''that the U.S. Government has announced the goal of working toward a Middle East trade area. A comprehensive U.S. strategy to counterterrorism should include economic policies that encourage development, more open societies and opportunities for people to improve the lives of their families and to enhance prospects for their children's future.''

This important statement by the 9/11 Commission I think is consistent with moving forward this week to approve this Oman FTA.

□ 2030

Mr. Speaker, in assessing the impact of the Oman FTA, I have done a lot of research and I have tried to, I think, come up with an honest assessment of how this free trade agreement will affect our balance of trade.

As the Speaker well knows, I have spoken here many times about my concern about our large trade imbalance, about the fact that we are running a record trade deficit, and I am happy to say that my research suggests that the U.S.-Oman FTA will be a move in the right direction, if adopted. This FTA builds upon a well-established and receptive market for U.S. goods and services.

In 2005, U.S. exports were $593,000,000, up significantly from 2004. And again, I would note that 100 percent of bilateral trade in consumer and industrial products will become duty-free effective immediately on passage of this agreement, creating a substantial market in that part of the Middle East for our exports beyond what we have already.

Additionally, this FTA benefits key U.S. export and service sectors such as

the banking, securities, audio visual, express delivery, telecommunications, computer and related services, distribution, health care, insurance, construction, architecture and engineering sectors.

This agreement, as I have noted before, also contains tough intellectual property rights provisions to enforce strict antipiracy and counterfeiting laws. While we continue to call for an ambitious outcome of the negotiations of the WTO-Doha Development Round, we also recognize that it is important that we go forward with bilateral agreements such as the Oman agreement.

The passage of this FTA would send a strong signal to the world that the U.S. is going to continue to be a leader on trade policy, and that we were committed to opening a very important additional beachhead in the Middle East.

I think that when I talk to people in northwestern Pennsylvania, an area where we export a lot of manufactured goods, people want to know if this or any other new FTA has the potential to create future trade imbalances. I think it is particularly instructive that the U.S. International Trade Commission has done a study of the Oman FTA, and I would like to read from a part of the executive summary.

The finding of the ITC was as follows: The U.S.-Oman FTA will likely have a small but positive impact on the U.S. economy. The benefits will likely be moderated by the relatively small size of Oman's economy and Oman's share of U.S. trade. Oman accounted for less than .5 percent of total U.S. goods trade in 2004. The trade and welfare effects of tariff elimination on trade and goods will likely be negligible, reflecting not only the small volume of trade between the United States and Oman, but also the low tariffs on current bilateral trade. Tariff liberalization under the FTA will likely have little effect on the U.S. economy, industry and consumers because U.S. imports of most goods from Oman already enter duty-free or at low duty rates. Tariff liberalization will likely have a greater effect on U.S. imports of apparel from Oman, albeit from a small and diminished 2005 base. As such, the expected increase in U.S. apparel imports from Oman will be small in absolute value and quantity terms. In addition, the resulting increased annual levels of U.S. apparel imports from Oman will likely remain below the 2004 level of U.S. apparel imports from Oman. Most of the expected growth in U.S. apparel imports from Oman will likely displace U.S. apparel imports from other countries rather than domestic production.

Continuing, the FTA will likely increase export opportunities for U.S. firms when Oman immediately removes its uniform tariff of 5 percent ad valorem on U.S. goods and as it phases out its other tariffs on U.S. goods. The 5 percent tariff applied to 91 percent of U.S. exports to Oman in 2004. These exports consist mostly of machinery, transportation equipment, and measuring instruments. The FTA will also likely increase opportunities for U.S. providers of services through improved market access and greater regulatory transparency. For example, the FTA will liberalize provisions affecting trade in insurance services as well as banking and securities services such as asset management services.

So I think the point here, Mr. Speaker, is that this is a great opportunity for us, not a great threat, but is also an opportunity, I think, for closer economic engagements in the Middle East.

With that, I would like to yield to the gentleman from Wisconsin, Mr. RYAN, who is cochairman of our caucus, for such time as he may consume.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. I thank the gentleman for yielding. I just want to congratulate the gentleman for all his leadership on this issue. And I too want to come to the floor of the House of Representatives to talk about how important this Oman trade agreement really is and how it fits in the whole scheme of things with respect to our strategy for the Middle East.

Now, a lot of people are paying attention to the Middle East. We watched over the weekend all of the awful things that are happening in Israel and southern Lebanon, and we realize that if we are to win the war on terror, we have to look at a short-term strategy and a long-term strategy. And when I think about the things we want to accomplish with the Middle East and with moderate Arab countries, democracy. Democracy and freedom and individual rights are the ultimate, the ultimate weapon against terrorism. When a young person grows up into a closed society with no opportunity to reach his or her destiny or his aspirations or dreams, they are going to be more susceptible to the likes of al Qaeda. They are going to be more susceptible to joining into some kind of a perverted ideology that can convince a young man or a young woman to strap on a suicide belt and go into a pizza parlor and blow themselves up. But people growing up in free societies, in democracies, are people who have a chance to reach their aspirations, to channel their energies to better themselves and their families. By growing up in a free society, that is how we can ultimately make sure that our children aren't fighting the war on terror that we are fighting, aren't confronting the kind of awful terrorism we are confronting.

Why does anything that I just said have anything to do with the Oman trade agreement? Well, here, Mr. Speaker, is what it has to do with the Oman trade agreement. With these trade agreements, we don't get just lower tariffs for corn and soybeans and cars and plastics; with these trade agreements, we get good government. With these trade agreements, we get these countries who voluntarily change their rules and their laws to be more free and open to their own people. By engaging in a trade agreement with the United States of America, a country in the Middle East such as Oman, embraces the rule of law, embraces enforceable contracts, individual rights.

Let me just go through a few of the things that Oman has agreed to as a consequence and as a part of this free trade agreement.

Political reforms. Oman has enacted reforms to increase public participation in government, extending voting rights for its consultive council to all citizens over the age of 21, and appointing women to key positions in its government, including the first female Ambassador from an Arab country appointed to serve in the United States. Oman is a leader in women's rights. Oman is a leader in suffrage so that women are treated more equally in the Arab gulf.

Economic reforms. Oman has enacted broad economic reforms to open itself to trade and investment and provide opportunities to its citizens. In fact, the economic freedom of the world 2005 ranks Oman 17 of 127 countries analyzed in terms of economic freedom. They are the second highest ranking among all countries in the proposed Middle East free trade area.

Labor reforms. This is where a lot of progress has been made. Oman has unilaterally, across all labor laws, through decrees and commitments, upgraded their labor standards for their workers, for their employees, for their citizens to at least the ILO core standards. This is the strongest labor agreement, trade agreement, we have ever had with the free trade agreements with the United States.

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania. Will the gentleman yield for a moment on that point?

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. I would be happy to yield.

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania. Because the gentleman really was, on the floor, our leading not only advocate for but expert on the Bahrain FTA, comparing this free trade agreement and the commitment the government has made on top of it at a time certain, to the agreement made by Bahrain, how does this compare in strength?

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. This exceeds the Bahrain agreement because, like Bahrain, Oman agreed not only to the core ILO, International Labor Organization standards and worker rights, but with the Bahrain agreement, Bahrain simply agreed to introduce legislation to their Parliament and then try to pass the legislation, upgrading their labor standards.

Oman went beyond that. Oman agreed to decree, to put these into law. So not only, with Bahrain we got the promise to propose legislation; in Oman we got the law. We got the changes. Changes are taking place right now as we speak. Some changes took place last week. All of the labor standard increases will take place by October 30 of this year. So the fact is with Oman, because of the negotiations of the free trade agreement, we are rising the tide of worker rights. We are

rising the quality and openness of this society. We are looking at an ally who has been a tremendous ally in the war on terror. They have ended their Israeli boycotts. They have opened up and are opening up trade with Israel. They are giving women unprecedented rights relative to other Arab countries. And all of this is being done because of trade agreements.

We didn't send a division of soldiers to Oman. We didn't parachute the 82nd Airborne into Oman. We didn't fire a bullet. We didn't put a boot on the ground. We engaged in trade negotiations and trade agreements, and this democratization, this openness, this free economic model, is being embraced by the Omanis because of these trade agreements.

So what we are accomplishing here is the single most important aspect of our war on terror, the single most important aspect of making sure that our children are safe from a world of terror when they reach our age group, when they come of age; and that is, making the Middle East more free, more democratic, more open, so that young people growing up in these countries will have opportunities to pursue their dreams, to pursue their aspirations, to determine the direction of their own lives.

That, in a nutshell is why these agreements are so important in the Middle East. That is why this particular agreement with Oman is so important to pass because of all of the wonderful things they are doing to help their own countrymen, to open up their society, to liberalize their economy, to give people individual rights in their economy so they can reach those dreams, all with an agreement that is in our best interest economically.

It is good for our jobs. We will sell more of American-made equipment. We will sell more American-made agricultural products. We will get more jobs out of the deal, and they will get closer to a much more open society. That, Mr. Speaker, is what I call a win-win situation. That is why I think it is so important that we take all of these wonderful reforms that they have enacted and pass the rest of these into law by implementing this Oman Free Trade Agreement, because it is good for Omanis, it is good for Americans, and it is, most importantly, good for keeping democracy alive in the Middle East, keeping freedom alive, and keeping terrorism at bay.

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania. Will the gentleman yield again?

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. I would be happy to.

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania. On that point, I think it is important that the listeners and our colleagues understand some of the labor standards that are being implemented here. We are talking about a commitment by Oman to strengthen collective bargaining laws, to protect the right to strike, to ensure the reinstatement of wrongly dismissed workers, to allow multiple union federations, to ensure adequate penalties for antiunion discrimination, to end the government involvement in union activity and to do things like strengthen efforts against child labor that have been such a blight in that region.

Oman, at a stroke, is taking a real leadership role in moving forward in this area that is going to set this up as a modernizing government and as a modernizing society that really is going to be a good example in the region. And I wonder if the gentleman agrees with me that this breakthrough by Oman is something not only important for us to sustain in terms of our economic opportunities, but also, I think, fulfills part of our role as a liberalizing force in the world and setting the right sort of example in the Middle East.

□ 2045

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. I will. And if the gentleman will yield, I just want to read a quote from the 9/11 Commission report which talked about these FTAs, and the 9/11 Commission which revealed what should America do to win the war on terrorism to make Americans safer again. They said a ''comprehensive U.S. strategy should include economic policies that encourage development, more open societies and opportunities for people to improve the lives of their families and enhance the prospects of their children.'' That is why we should engage in these FTAs, these free trade agreements in the Middle East.

This new breakthrough from Oman on all these higher labor standards that they are raising is precedent setting. It does encourage its neighbors just like Bahrain is now engaging in. It encourages their neighbors to increase not only their standards of labor for their citizens but to increase their citizens' access to prosperity, access to opportunity, access to bettering their lives for themselves. That is what is accomplished by seeing this dialogue take place. That is what is accomplished when we as Americans engage in mutual economic agreements like this.

The thing that also impresses me with the Oman Free Trade Agreement, just like we had with Bahrain and Morocco and others, is our governments are getting to know each other much better. Because we are involved in a global war on terrorism, it inevitably involves a strong level of dialogue between the United States Government and the United States Congress and the governments and the leaders of those countries. But what we are lacking is human-to-human interaction, people-to-people interaction, understanding of the American people, of the citizens of Oman, the citizens of Bahrain, the citizens of Middle Eastern countries.

That is what trade accomplishes. Trade brings people together. Trade brings people into engaging in mutually beneficial endeavors, the people of America, farmers, manufacturers. We make tractors, Case Construction Equipment in Racine, Wisconsin. We sell cheese. We grow corn and soybeans, General Motors cars. We want our people to go to these countries and understand them, know them, sell them their products and have people-to-people interaction. And if we have people-to-people interaction through trade, through business agreements, through business arrangements, then we have better understanding of one another. And better understanding of one another, better friendships will bridge the gaps between cultures. That will help us fundamentally understand what is going on in the Middle East, and it will help them understand us.

My biggest fear is that people in the Arab world, they call it the infamous ''Arab Street,'' that they will look at al Jazeera or VH1 or some distorted lens of what Americans stand for, of who Americans are, of what American culture is, and that is how they will frame their opinions. That is not what I want them to think America is all about. What I hope people in the Arab world think America is all about is by meeting an American, is by meeting somebody from America who can engage in an agreement of mutual economic behavior, who can engage in trade, who can sell corn and soybeans and things like that.

That is how we help bridge this gap, bring understanding of each other, and work together to fighting the war on terror. By bringing moderate Muslim countries in allegiance with us and growing our alliances and growing our strategic allies, we will help defeat the terrorists. The minority of Islamic fundamentalists in this part of the world that seek to do them and us harm, we can work together and defeat that. And what the best consequence of it at the end of the day is people become more prosperous. There are more jobs created at both sides of the ocean, both sides of the equation.

That is why I think this is such an important trade agreement, and that is why this is an important part of our continuing efforts to increase ties and economic engagement with countries in the Middle East. And this is, of all things, one of the most successful foreign-policy tools we have at our disposal, and it is a sign of respect. It shows these countries, Oman in particular, that we respect them. We respect their people. We respect their leaders. We respect the reforms that they are implementing to give their people more freedom. That is a sign of respect, and I think with respect you get better understanding, better allies, and better strategic alliances, and that is all to the good.

I just want to thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania for having this hour to discuss this. We will be voting on this in a couple of days, and this is yet again a very, very important piece of our foreign policy and our economic policy to create more jobs here and to make us more safe. And I just want to

thank the gentleman for having this discussion tonight.

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman for coming forward and so vividly presenting on the floor a positive vision of how we can engage the Middle East, how we can help them create opportunities, and how we can offer a positive agenda for fighting Islamofascism by getting at its root causes, by creating economic opportunities for young Arab men, by creating economic opportunities for these communities at a time when, in lieu of those opportunities, increasingly they turn to a dark vision of the world.

I think tonight, as the skies are lit up in Lebanon and over Israel, it is important for us to be able to offer a different approach for engaging those countries and for ultimately bringing them into the economic mainstream. I thank the gentleman for his extraordinary remarks.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. If the gentleman will yield further.

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania. I will yield, and I believe we have another speaker as well.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. I think it is important to note the bipartisan nature of these agreements in the past. We had the best vote count of this session of Congress on a trade agreement in the last Bahraini Free Trade Agreement. We passed with large bipartisan votes the Moroccan Free Trade Agreement. We passed with great bipartisan votes the Jordanian Free Trade Agreement. The Oman Free Trade Agreement already passed with a very large bipartisan vote in the other body, the Senate.

We, hopefully, will continue to pass these things with good bipartisan agreements because in this sense it is very important that as we go overseas on an issue that is so important that we speak with one voice, as Democrats and as Republicans, that we make these bipartisan. And I am very pleased with the fact that Congress has for large measure treated these important Middle East free trade agreements on a bipartisan basis. Our caucus includes three Republican cochairmen and three Democrat cochairmen. So I do believe that we will see support from the other side of the aisle. I do not know how big it will be, but it is very important that we speak with one voice, saying it is not just the Republicans who want to do this, it is not just the Democrats. It is that the Americans want to engage in trade with the Middle East countries we are talking about. We want to support their efforts to modernize, their efforts to open, to liberalize their economies. And that to me is a very important signal.

I see that we have been joined by the gentlewoman from Connecticut.

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I am most grateful and delighted that a strong advocate of trade and fair trade has joined us tonight to speak out on the Oman Free Trade Agreement.

I yield to the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Mrs. JOHNSON) on this point.

Mrs. JOHNSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania for yielding.

And I am delighted to be here on the floor with two of my colleagues who have been tremendous advocates of this free trade agreement and of the concept of free trade, the principle of free trade internationally and in our country.

I want to make two general points. I am sorry that I wasn't able to be here earlier, and I do not want to repeat what my colleagues have said. But there are two important overall points that I want to make that, even if you have made them, are worth thinking again about.

First is why free trade is important. Retirees simply do not, by definition, buy enough consumer goods to drive an economy our size. We are accustomed to a standard of living that is, frankly, the highest in the world. Our children expect to grow up and participate as adults in an economy that is thriving, in well-paying jobs that can provide them with a standard of living that my generation has enjoyed. Yet as the number of retirees explodes and the number of young people in the workforce contracts, our own Nation cannot provide the demand for goods that can produce the overall gross national product that will assure the standard of living we are accustomed to. So future generations are going to be more dependent on trade than we have been, and we must open markets for their goods.

The American population will not be able to buy the amount of stuff that would drive an economy that can produce the standard of living that we have enjoyed. So if we do not have consumers around the world, and, remember, the great majority of consumers are outside the United States, if we do not cultivate them, if they do not open their markets to our products, then we cannot sustain the level of economic well-being, the standard of living to which we have been accustomed, and we thereby disadvantage our children.

This small agreement with one small country will allow consumer and industrial goods to enter that country 100 percent duty free. One hundred percent duty free. And agricultural products will enter 87 percent duty free and over 10 years reach 100 percent duty free. This is a small market, but we are making these agreements with country after country after country. And most startling, our exports are growing most rapidly and the majority of our growth in export goods is with those countries that we have negotiated trade agreements with. Now, that stands to reason because if you sell your goods into a country where there is no duty, they are going to do better than if you sell them into a country where there is a 20 percent, 30 percent, 40 percent, 50 percent duty that pushes that price right up.

So in the big picture, our children, our grandchildren cannot do well unless we lay the foundation by opening markets for American products all across the world. So our economic well-being depends on free trade agreements. Those free trade agreements, and the gentlemen here on the floor with me tonight have been strong advocates of fair trade agreements, these free trade agreements address labor standards, environmental standards. We are the only Nation in the whole world that pushes those issues in the negotiation of trade agreements with other countries, and we are reaching new standards as we move forward and gain more experience.

Now we do not just require labor standards. We help nations build institutions to enforce those standards. So we look at do you have a department of labor. We look at does the department of labor have sufficient staff to enforce the law. We look at do the regulations take seriously the responsibility of enforcement. And we literally help nations not only understand how labor standards help them deliver the benefits of world trading to all in their society, but we help them understand that just having the standards to support all their people is not enough.

You do have to be able to enforce those standards. You do have to be able to take action against the exploitive employer. So these trade agreements are good for our kids. They are good for peoples of the world.

And that brings me to my second major point. Our security depends on agreements like that we have negotiated with Oman. The 9/11 Commission report cited our Middle Eastern free trade agreements and call for action on ''a comprehensive U.S. strategy that should include economic policies that encourage development, more open societies, and opportunities for people to improve the lives of their families and enhance the prospects of their children's future.'' In other words, the 9/11 report was saying if you do not address the causes that are creating terrorism and the willingness to be terrorists in other societies, you cannot solve the problem.

And I want to just conclude by saying how very impressed I was when Ways and Means Committee members a little less than 2 years ago made a trip to the Middle Eastern nations that were interested in trade agreements and whose other trading agreements were about to expire.

□ 2100

We knew that they would need to think about this in advance carefully.

We know that participating in trade agreements means other countries have to modernize their law to meet high international standards. We knew it would take time, and we wanted to be sure to alert these other countries to the challenges that lay ahead for them in negotiating these free trade agreements and to the enormous benefits that would accrue to their people

in not only the present but future generations.

I must say, I was extremely impressed with the Sultan of Oman. He understood exactly what this was going to mean to his people. He is one of the Middle East leaders who understands that oil is a limited resource and he must prepare a broader base for economic success for his people in his own country, and he is doing some of the work in the more advanced areas of desalinization, thinking about the importance of water to his people and the demand in the world economy, particularly in the Middle East, for potable water.

He is a very forward-looking man. He is very committed to participation in the political process by women as well as men. He has appointed successful women to his top council. They do things slightly differently because they are coming from a different path, but he was very proud to have started worker committees. That was his initiative, because he knows workers have to have a better voice. They have to be free to talk about the problems, to work with management, to work with owners for everyone's success.

In this agreement, he has moved light years ahead, looking at the labor laws of other countries, understanding what it is going to take to provide the kind of support and protection that working people need in order for the benefits of trade to affect the lives, the quality of lives, the hopes and dreams, the opportunities of all the people in each society.

So when you look at not only the way this agreement opens markets and what that means for our people, when you look at what this means for our security as this great friend of ours, for over 170 years, and a leader in the region in economic and governance reforms, what they accomplish by moving forward into new thinking and new institutions to modernize their economy, all embodied in this trade agreement, you know it means not only greater prosperity for his country and for our country, it means greater peace for the world.

Free trade is about peace and prosperity. It must be fair trade. It must help all take part in the benefits of the trade agreement.

This is a remarkable agreement, and I very much appreciate the two gentlemen on the floor here, Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin and Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania, for their diligent participation in all the consultative processes, because Congress is a part of developing these free trade agreements, that make these agreements possible. Your knowledge and expertise is truly a great service that you have given this country and that you have given our friend, Oman.

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, I would simply like to thank the gentlelady for her extraordinary and insightful comments in capsulizing the very powerful argument for passing this free trade agreement and ultimately recognizing the key role of Oman in that region.

I would be happy to yield to the gentleman from Wisconsin if he would like to make concluding remarks, and then I would like to make a further contribution, with the inspiration of the gentlelady from Connecticut.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. I thank the gentleman for yielding. I want to draw off the inspiration I just received from the gentlelady from Connecticut's comments.

As I listened to her give this excellent overview of not only the benefits of these trade agreements, but of this one in particular, of all the work that the Omanis have gone through to bring this up into shape, to increase their worker rights, to increase their transparency, to increase their participation in women's rights, I just couldn't help but thinking, What if we don't pass this? What if we say no? What if we here in the House of Representatives this week say, that is not good enough, sorry, no, to the Omanis?

The Omanis are taking a risk in their neighborhood. They are choosing whether or not to go down the path of the Iranians and the Syrians and others like that, or to go down the path of openness, of freedom, to be an ally with the U.S. in fighting the war on terror and giving people freedom.

What if we say no to that? I just cannot imagine the consequences of us working with this ally of ours, getting them to agree to all of these enormous amounts of reforms and concessions to make this trade agreement work, and then only to say no. That, in my opinion, Madam Speaker, would be a tragedy.

It would be a tragic mistake to say to this country, this ally, these people whom we have the utmost amount of respect for, to say, sorry, partisan politics. It is an election year. Didn't mean to have you as collateral damage, but no. That to me would be an outright tragedy if that happened.

So I want to conclude on a high note, and that high note is just as we helped lift the tide of freedom and economic engagement and economic freedom in Morocco, in Israel, in Jordan, in Bahrain, so too do I think we will do this in Oman this week. And all of that is going to increase U.S. jobs. Yes, it is going to help us sell more products to the region. But, most importantly, it is going to help the people in these countries have a better life. It is going to help them be more free. And that is going to help make sure that my children, my kids, who are 4, 3, and 1 year old, make sure that they live in a peaceful America, that they don't have to fight the fight against terror that we are right now engaged in. That is what this means to me when I put my card in the voting machine and vote on this agreement in a couple of days.

That is why this is so dearly important. That is why this is not just your rank-and-file trade agreement for widgets and corn and dairy or whatever. That is why this is an important trade agreement.

I really encourage all of my colleagues, put the partisan blinders aside for that day and vote with America, vote for your kids, vote for good economics and vote for freedom in the Middle East.

Madam Speaker, with that, I would be happy to conclude and say thank you to the gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. ENGLISH, for all your leadership on this issue. Thank you for hosting this discussion tonight. I think it has been very helpful. I just look forward to making sure this actually occurs, I think on Thursday when we do this.

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman.

With that, I want to thank the gentleman again for his leadership on this issue, his vision and his commitment to building closer ties between the United States and the Middle East region.

The gentleman raised the very important question of not only the substance of the Oman agreement, but also its symbolism, because I think there will clearly be consequences to not passing the Oman FTA, if that were to happen in the House.

Oman, as the gentlelady noted, has been a steadfast ally of the United States for over 170 years. Oman has been a hugely valuable partner on the war on terror and has hosted U.S. soldiers and permitted the U.S. to use Oman as a critical launch site for ongoing operations in Afghanistan. Oman has embarked on what is clearly a large-scale, if not unprecedented, reform effort.

In terms of labor rights, worker safety, women's rights, Oman has shown tremendous commitment to improving these standards for both Omani workers, as well as the large number of expat workers currently working in Oman. They have a large number of guest workers, and this is part of their initiative.

Reforms in the area of labor have been commendable, even exceeding the level of commitment made by Bahrain as they entered into FTA with us. Were the Oman FTA not to receive the support of a wide majority of Congress, it would send tonight absolutely the wrong signal, not only to Oman, but to the entire Middle East region at a very sensitive moment. Passage of the FTA is not only in the commercial and political interests of the United States, it is also necessary to support the reforms in Oman and to deliver an important shot in the arm to stability in the Middle East region.

It is clear that despite turmoil within the Middle East, Oman has risen to become a regional leader, improving its labor standards, opening its markets and being accountable for intellectual property rights violations, among others.

Furthermore, our pact with Oman solidifies the strong U.S.-Oman alliance in the global war on terror. We listened tonight to the recommendation of the 9/11 Commission, and also we have the March 2006 National Security Strategy specifically citing the need to advance trade and economic liberalization in the Persian Gulf region as a key part of a comprehensive U.S. strategy to bolster security, to fight terrorism and to oppose Islama-fascism. However, America's influence in the region has to be measured by more than projected military might. If we are going to help anchor the Middle East in the modern world, we clearly must reduce conflict in the region by promoting growth and opportunity.

As the gentleman from Wisconsin said tonight, the U.S.-Oman FTA is a win-win policy that only builds upon our country's goal of strengthening economic relations and increasing trade, fair trade, with our partners in the Middle East. By strengthening our ties with the key strategic ally committed to trade liberalization and economic reform, the U.S.-Oman FTA will demonstrate to other countries in the region the benefits of free and open rules-based trade and engagement with the United States.

I hope that come Thursday, my colleagues on a bipartisan basis, as the gentleman put it, will put aside their partisan blinders and consider supporting this trade pact when it reaches the floor. A ''yes'' vote means yet another step on the long road to expanding new economic opportunity for both of our regions.

IRAQ WATCH

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. SCHMIDT). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. LARSON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Madam Speaker, once again we come to the floor this evening as part of Iraq Watch. We do so this evening with both heavy and somber hearts for everything that is going on as we currently speak in the Middle East. Our hearts especially go out to our great ally Israel, as it wards off vicious attacks by Hezbollah. Once again, it only underscores the need for us in this body to do the kind of oversight and review and have the kind of dialogue and discussion that has been absent on the floor of this House and in our respective committees.

Madam Speaker, as we have on so many of these occasions, we begin this evening by once again honoring as well those brave men and women who wear the uniform of our country. They serve this Nation so valiantly.

Let me also acknowledge so many veterans and individuals who have played such a key role, especially those from the Vietnam era, in understanding and helping us recognize that it is so important to differentiate between the warriors and the war. So we salute those brave men and women who are in harm's way, who are dealing with untenable situations they are confronted with in Iraq.

I especially want to draw attention again to a bill that we have before this body that we are still seeking more signatures to, and requesting and asking the Speaker and the majority leader to bring it to the floor by unanimous consent.

□ 2115

I do not believe that there is anyone in this body that does not understand the need for making sure that the Iraqi government does not grant amnesty to those who kidnap, kill, torture and maim American citizens and American troops.

And so I think it is so vitally important that this message be sent, especially as the insurgency only intensifies in the region. Brookings Institute and others who have polled find that 47 percent of the people in Iraq believe that it is okay to kill Americans. It is time that we send a clear message. That is why we come to the floor on successive evenings to send a clear message to the American public about what is transpiring before our eyes.

We pause, as I said earlier, both in somber and peaceful resolution that this conflict can be resolved speedily and we especially pray for those Americans who need to be evacuated from harm's way.

Madam Speaker, I am joined this evening by several of my colleagues who have come to this floor on repeated occasions to talk about a new direction that is needed in the Middle East, a new direction that needs to be taken by this Congress, a new direction that needs to be taken by this President, so we provide an opportunity for this great country of ours to once again move us forward out of harm's way and into a peaceful resolution to what has become consistently a quagmire known as Iraq.

With that, I recognize the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT).

Mr. DELAHUNT. Madam Speaker, I thank my friend and colleague from Connecticut. It is good to be joined by my other colleague from New York (Mr. BISHOP) and Chris Van Hollen from Maryland.

Madam Speaker, I would like to speak for just a moment regarding what is happening in terms of the war on terror. We should all be alarmed. We see the events of recent days unfolding in Lebanon, Israel, in Gaza. And it is clear that terrorism is spreading. It is not declining.

I would submit that those events were inevitable, the law of unintended consequences, if you will, that many of us predicted when the resolution that authorized the invasion of Iraq came to the floor. I dare say that in the Mideast today there is an awareness on the part of world opinion that the war in Iraq has increased the likelihood of terrorist attacks around the world.

A recent poll that was commissioned by the BBC, and again, this was a poll that was taken in some 35 countries, found that 60 percent of the world believes that the threat of terrorism has increased some 60 percent, while only 12 percent believed that it has declined.

And the nexus was the war in Iraq, and the conduct of the war in Iraq. They saw the war in Iraq as an impediment to the defeat of terrorism. And the experts agree. There was a survey done of more than 100 individuals with extensive foreign policy experience and national security backgrounds.

And what was particularly disturbing is that among the experts, 84 percent said that the United States was not winning the war on terrorism, and some 86 percent said that the world was becoming more, not less, dangerous in terms of terrorism because of our involvement in Iraq.

This is extremely frightening. And let me put forth a premise to you, to my colleagues. I would suggest that it is not unrelated that we see Hamas and Hezbollah asserting themselves today, in the past several weeks, because there is a growing awareness that the United States is bogged down in Iraq, and that world opinion in terms of the role of the United States in Iraq is highly negative.

And what do we see in terms of the new Iraqi government and its relationship with Iran, a sponsor of Hezbollah and a sponsor of Hamas? We see exchange of diplomats. We see a billion dollar line of credit coming from Iran to Iraq. We see a military corporation agreement between Iran and Iraq. Iran, the sponsor of Hezbollah and Hamas. That is what we see. That is what we are seeing.

And we are listening to the foreign minister, the foreign minister of Iraq when asked about the United States pressuring Iran to disclose where they are in the development of nuclear technology, to disclose whether any of those efforts could be utilized to develop a nuclear bomb, a nuclear weapon.

And the Iraqi foreign minister is saying, do not pressure the Iranians; accept their word. I mean, what is happening? Are the American people aware of these particular events? And then of course at the same time, the forgotten war, if you will, the country that harbored al Qaeda, that was ruled by a radical Islamists sect called the Taliban is on the verge of unraveling.

The Afghan defense minister recently made this statement: we need five times the number of security forces to address the issue of a resurgent Taliban. Without them we are in real danger of collapse. So everywhere we look in terms of the Middle East, we see danger and we see danger to Israel, we see danger in the entire region. And we hear, ''Stay the course.''

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Madam Speaker, the gentleman makes a great