Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge and

applaud the inauguration this past weekend of Iraq's new permanent

unity government. For 3 years, democracy has been coming to Iraq, and

now it is officially here.

Millions have participated in the process, voting and debating, and

now the people of Iraq finally have their own sovereign, democratically

elected government. The Iraqis have overcome huge obstacles,

uncertainty, threats, violence and fear, but have continued to stand

firm for the most noble of ideals, freedom and democracy.

In just 3 years, we have seen a tyrannical oppressive dictatorship

removed and a fully sovereign democracy born. Their new government is

one of unity with Kurds, Shiites and Sunnis all serving in prominent

leadership roles. All the people of Iraq may proudly stand up and say,

this is their government, their country, and they will honor and

protect it.

Mr. Speaker, the historic significance of this event cannot be

overestimated. From this day forward, we must always look at Iraq as a

nation of independence, a nation of freedom and a nation of democracy.

May it always be.