Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Iraqi

people on their participation in a successful election. The successful

vote was a major stride for many Iraqis. Guns, bombs and violence were

largely set aside for the day as a large majority of Iraqis went to the

polls and exercised their right to vote. It is my sincere hope that

with the new government in order, the bloodshed in Iraq will be

replaced by an open, democratic debate.

I cannot, however, support this flawed resolution. The resolution

focuses more on affirming the President's strategy for a continued

military presence in Iraq than actually congratulating the Iraqis. And,

while I agree with this resolution that a timeline for a U.S. Armed

Forces withdrawal is not the proper course of action at this time, I

strongly believe our military effort needs to be exceeded by the

diplomatic effort to come. Unfortunately though, this resolution does

not express that sense. It is nothing more than another political

tactic by the Republican leadership meant to squash a real debate on

Iraq in favor of a one-sided avowal of faith in an administration that

has proved unfaithful.

We have never had a real debate on Iraq here in the House and this

resolution does not offer real deliberation either. I call on my

friends in the leadership to allow this House, the greatest legislative

body in the world, to have a candid discussion, a full and fair debate,

for at least 2 days, on this critical matter.

It is becoming increasingly clear that the United States is not doing

enough to ensure that diplomacy will win out over violence. Certainly

that is our objective, I do not deny that, but without a clear plan

from the administration to achieve this aim I fear that our presence in

Iraq could be protracted for much longer than it could or should be.

This war will not turn to peace by military means alone. Diplomacy,

democracy, and dialogue are the only true ways that Iraq can be a

success. After four major speeches on Iraq from the President, I still

have not seen an honest appraisal from this administration on the

progress that has been made, and more importantly, what we are doing to

ensure future progress. This is the type of discussion that we should

be having here in the House, not a bogus debate on a hollow political

resolution veiled as a congratulatory message to the Iraqi people.

We need a change of course in Iraq. We should hasten the shift of

control to the Iraqis and move away from military conflict. Peace in

Iraq can only be achieved by the Iraqis themselves. Therefore, there

must be more emphasis on finding diplomatic solutions to Iraqi

problems; to bringing in more nations to work with the Iraqis to

rebuild and restructure their country; and there must be support for

Iraqi democracy in all its forms. The Iraqi constitution clearly needs

to be revisited and the administration must put pressure on the ruling

parties, no matter who emerges victorious from the election, to engage

in an honest, open deliberation on the amendment process to ensure that

all Iraqis feel that they have a legitimate stake in the future of

their country.

We have lost more than 2,000 brave men and women in Iraq. In excess

of 100,000 active and reserve soldiers continue to serve in Iraq. We

must honor the sacrifices and achievements of our troops, the pain

borne by their families, and we must celebrate what they have been able

to accomplish in spite of the incompetence and arrogance of this

administration. Yesterday's elections give hope to the success of a

free Iraq. Let us build on this momentum and show Iraqis and the world

that the U.S. is truly committed to a stable and free Iraq achieved

through diplomacy, not through military might.

Again, I congratulate the Iraqi people on a successful election

yesterday. They showed the world that freedom knows no bounds. And I

believe we must give our brave men and women all the support they need

to achieve victory. However, I urge my colleagues to vote against this

cynical, and frankly, disgracefully political, resolution, and ask that

my colleagues seek a debate beyond platitudes in this House and demand

more honesty and action from this administration.