Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of this

resolution, first to praise the efforts of our men and women in the

military who have worked so hard and sacrificed so much on behalf of

this country. I also want to take a minute to recognize the courage and

resilience of the Iraqi women.

Under Saddam Hussein, Iraqi women lived in fear. They endured years

of great beatings, torture, under a farce of a legal system under which

they had no rights. Does no one remember the pictures of the Kurdish

people, dead, holding their babies in their arms, trying to shield them

from the horror of a weapon of mass destruction in Iraq? Only Baathists

were awarded the right to have medical care. Families were torn apart

on trumped-up charges. Divorce was grounds for having their children

taken away. Imagine a mother watching her child die because of her

political beliefs. Imagine watching a husband leave for work one day,

never to come back. Imagine walking down the street and having their

children ripped from their hands.

The persecution of women under Saddam Hussein was brutal and

systematic and left deep and damaging psychological wounds. Women were

afraid to walk down the streets. Girls were afraid to go to school.

With the source of that oppression now removed great challenges lie

ahead. Some estimate, for example, that over 70 percent of the Iraqi

women are illiterate. They could not go to school.

Somehow this battered and oppressed nation has to educate a new

generation of Iraqi children. And in the face of that tough task, there

is optimism in Iraq. For the first time in generations, they see an

opportunity where only once they had terror. Where once there was

depravity, there is excitement and hope in these women for the future.

I have met with these women. I have talked with these women.

The optimism is due to the United States' intervention and the

selfless service of our men and women in uniform. In our Armed Forces

stationed in Iraq, women stand alongside with men there and they serve

as a model for the Iraqi women who aspire to that kind of equality on

their own in their own country.

The new Constitution of Iraq calls for almost a 25 percent

representation of women. The Iraqi women themselves have asked for 40

percent. Mr. Speaker, the resolution before us commends the Iraqi

people for their courage in the face of unspeakable oppression. I

commend the women of Iraq for overcoming that unspeakable adversity. I

hope that everyone will back this bill.