Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this

time.

I rise in strong support of this resolution. One year ago this week,

freedom came to the good people of Iraq and the tyrant Saddam Hussein

fell. And it is impossible to speak of the one without the other. And

the contents of this resolution are therefore fitting and appropriate.

I rise to support this resolution, Mr. Speaker, with my feet still

dusty from a trip to Iraq just 2 weeks ago. And while I was deeply

moved and overwhelmed by the valor of our troops during that journey, I

was equally moved by the gratitude and the affection that I experienced

from the people of Iraq. I really fell in love with the Iraqi people,

and I learned that the Iraqis that I met love the American people.

We traveled through a ravaged city of Basra, one-story sandstone

homes, and met at Coalition Provisional Headquarters. During our

meeting with top civil and religious leaders, I thought when it came to

my turn I would just ask them, What did they think of our decision to

remove Saddam Hussein? And what had been a cool if not distant

atmosphere in our discussion suddenly erupted in a flourish of passion

and candor. A local Muslim leader, whose dress and appearance gave him

an ancient air, said icily to me ``Saddam Hussein was a nightmare, and

the day that your people removed him from power was a day when a dark

curtain was lifted from the people of Iraq and the daylight was able to

shine in.''

Later we met with a large group of ordinary Iraqis eager to speak to

American officials. As we sat around the lunch table, there were

pointed opinions. These English-speaking Iraqis were so strong in their

views and sometimes criticisms of our reconstruction policies, I

thought for all the world I was back on the floor of Congress. But then

they began to speak of their gratitude toward the American people, of

the horror of living under Saddam Hussein, of 400,000 bodies of men and

women and boys and girls that had been found, and another 800,000 that

were missing. I saw them many times, Mr. Speaker, with tears in their

eyes say to me as an American official ``When you go home, tell the

people that you serve that we are grateful to the American people and

your allies for what you have done for us.'' And they were breathlessly

excited about democracy.

I will never forget the moment at a USAID class where I spoke to a

group of Iraqi women. They shared with me poems in English that they

had written about democracy, and almost with the enthusiasm of grade-

school children, their hands almost quivered as they spoke of the

future in which they believe.

I rise to honor in this resolution our Armed Forces, our allies, and

the good people of Iraq, all of whom deserve the resolution and support

of this Congress.