Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H. Res.

557, commemorating the 1 year anniversary of the liberation of the

Iraqi people.

In the past year, our soldiers, sailors, and airmen have performed

magnificently, first liberating an oppressed country and now

stabilizing peace and security. We could not be more proud of their

efforts and dedication, and we thank them and their families for their

commitment and sacrifices.

Solid progress has been made in the past year in reconstituting an

Iraqi civil society and public infrastructure--after nearly 30 years of

oppression under Saddam Hussein.

One sector I want to highlight is the work being done in improving

the education system for Iraq's children. This is a critical step in

giving them a viable, independent future, and it is necessary in order

to secure Iraq's place in the world as a prosperous and peaceful

country.

More children are attending school--currently 5.5 million are in

school. All universities and technical schools have been re-opened. The

curriculum now focuses on teaching reading, writing, and math--not

instilling fear of the government.

As far as the Iraqi people have come in the last year, we know there

is still more work to be done. Our troops and Iraqis still face threats

from terrorists who have no future in a peaceful and prosperous Iraq.

Some during this debate have questioned the wisdom of our decision in

liberating Iraq and removing Saddam Hussein as a threat to the

international community. Some have focused on what has gone wrong,

rather than on what has gone right. The recent terrorist attack in

Spain should drive home the point of why we must take the fight to the

terrorists--rather than waiting to fight with them here on our soil.

This is not a clash of cultures, peoples of religions--this is about

fanatic fundamentalists who despise their peaceful fellow countrymen

and believers.

The new central front on the war on terror is Iraq. In order to

defeat the fundamentalists, who love death and destruction more than

they love life, we must stay the course in Iraq and in other parts of

the globe where we and our allies work to defeat terrorism.

The war on terrorism is a global effort; it is a long-term effort.

Terrorists have many agendas and capabilities. Their supporters hide in

dark shadows and are elusive. But the one thing they have in common is

the desire to change our way of life.

America is strong in its resolve in fighting terrorism. We will

succeed, and we will continue to be patient, deliberate, and consistent

in defending our citizens and interests.