Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume,

and I rise in strong support of H. Res. 691.

On June 30, a momentous date in the history of Iraq, after 45 years

of dictatorship and one year of occupation, a sovereign government

representative of the Iraqi people is about to assume power in Baghdad.

We take justifiable pride in the U.S. role in achieving that milestone,

and we pay tribute to our soldiers who have achieved this incredible

feat.

But there is no fooling ourselves, Mr. Speaker. The Iraq that Prime

Minister Iyad al-Alawi and his colleagues will inherit is far from

stable and it is far from prosperous, nor is it ready to assume full

responsibility for its Nation's security. For the United States, the

challenges of ensuring security, promoting reconstruction, and

fostering liberal and decent governance will continue essentially

unchanged for now. Whether we and the Iraqis look back at June 30, 2004

as an historic turning point for the good will be determined by our

joint ability to meet those ongoing and gigantic challenges.

Mr. Speaker, developments on our home front encourage the hope that

we can meet those challenges, as the positions on Iraq taken by leaders

of both of our parties are fundamentally congruent. The administration

has shown signs that it is willing to alter the course when necessary

in order to get the job done. I am pleased that the President embraced

the wisdom of acknowledging a major role for the United Nations. As a

result of the United Nations unanimously-adopted resolution, the soon-

to-be sovereign Iraqi government will have far greater domestic and

international legitimacy than otherwise it would have.

I think it is important to underscore that the likely nominee of the

Democratic Party for president, Senator Kerry, shares the basic vision,

and I quote: ``While we may have differed on how we went to war,

Americans of all political persuasions are united in our determination

to succeed. The extremists attacking our forces should know that they

will not succeed in dividing America, or in sapping American resolve,

or in forcing the premature withdrawal of U.S. troops. Our country is

committed to help the Iraqis build a stable, peaceful, and pluralistic

society.''

The most important line in my quotation from Senator Kerry is as

follows: ``No matter who is elected President in November, we will

persevere in that mission.''

Mr. Speaker, success in Iraq is a bipartisan, national interest. Not

only is the credibility of the United States at stake in the region and

around the globe, but an Iraq collapsing into chaos would be a heart of

darkness in the Middle East.

Mr. Speaker, Senator Kerry and President Bush are also on the same

page in calling on our NATO allies to show solidarity by reinforcing

our efforts in Iraq. Even though NATO nations may not have many

deployable troops to spare, there is nevertheless much that they can do

to. And the opportunity for NATO to make these important decisions in

the highest-profile manner possible will present itself next week at

the NATO summit in Istanbul.

As the NATO Secretary General said, we have a Security Council

resolution, a fully legitimate interim government in Iraq; NATO has no

excuse to slam the door in Iraq's face.

NATO States can and must provide training for the new Iraqi Army, and

they should do so in Iraq itself without requiring Iraqi troops to go

to a third country as some are suggesting.

One of the most brilliant of our military leaders, General David

Petraeus, is leading the U.S. effort to train Iraqi forces, and his

presence in that role should give all of us confidence in our ultimate

success. But building a fighting force capable of defeating Iraq's

fundamentalists and Saddamist thugs is a mammoth undertaking. NATO

nations are ideally positioned to support the efforts of General

Petraeus.

NATO troops can provide election security to support the all-

important Iraqi elections in January. If Iraq is to hold its first free

and democratic elections in its history, security is paramount.

Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. The European members of NATO, all of

them, should not contribute to Iraq's security as a favor to us, even

though the peace and prosperity that reigns in Europe today was won

with American blood and American treasure. They should do it as a favor

to themselves but, most importantly, to the Iraqi people. Europe's

stake in the stability of Iraq and the Middle East is greater than our

own. Europe borders the Middle East and is far more dependent on its

energy resources than are we here in the United States.

Europe's moral credibility is also at stake in Iraq. For years, the

States of the European Union, most of whom belong to NATO, have

trumpeted their commitment to democracy. Now it is time for them to

prove that this is more than rhetoric. When Iraqi President al-Yawar

was in town recently, he told a group of us that the presence of

European troops is crucial to Iraq. He emphasized that Iraq needs

security forces from law-abiding societies where human rights are

valuable to the people.

Mr. Speaker, Iraq is undertaking history's boldest experiment in

trying to build a more free and open society. If Europe is not with us,

its message to the Iraqi people and to the world is that it just does

not care about democratic developments outside its borders.

I call on President Chirac and Chancellor Schroeder and other

reluctant NATO leaders to stand up at the Istanbul summit and be

counted on behalf of the Iraqi people and democratic values.

Mr. Speaker, we already have many fine allies, NATO and nonNATO

alike, in our coalition in Iraq. Tony Blair's United Kingdom has shown

extraordinary courage and leadership. South

Korea's determination was tested by tragedy just this week, and it

proved itself a model of resolve. These nations are doing work from

which all of Europe will benefit, and they too deserve Europe's, and

that means NATO's, backing and help.

As the loyal opposition, we Democrats will continue to call this

administration to account for its errors in Iraq. We will continue to

offer constructive advice, as our duty demands, particularly from our

position of oversight authority in the legislative branch. But all of

us, Democrats and Republicans alike, are united in our commitment to

achieving success in giving rise to a durable, pluralistic, more open

and free society in Iraq.

It is not merely a simple matter of restoring sovereignty. George

Bernard Shaw observed, ``Liberty means responsibility. That is why most

men dread it.'' The new stewards of the sovereign Iraq will prove that

they are up to the task. As they do, we want them to know that we will

stand by them.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly support this resolution, and I urge all of my

colleagues to do so.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Robust debate is the hallmark of this body and this afternoon we had

a sampling of it for which we are all pleased. The difficulty in

dealing with the issues that we face in this world is that we do not

confront elegant alternatives but exasperating realities. It is in that

context that I wish to quote from the person who will be the nominee of

the Democratic Party at the upcoming convention on his views of this

resolution and of this undertaking. I am quoting from Senator Kerry:

``While we may have differed on how we went to war, Americans of all

political persuasions are united in our determination to succeed. The

extremists attacking our forces should know that they will not succeed

in dividing America, or in sapping American resolve, or in forcing the

premature withdrawal of U.S. troops. Our country is committed to help

the Iraqis build a stable, peaceful and pluralistic society. No matter

who is elected President in November, we will persevere in that

mission.''

Mr. Speaker, these are difficult days for our country, but we stand

united in our commitment to our troops and in our commitment to our

values. I urge all of my colleagues to support this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.