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

Mr. Speaker, we live indeed in a very historic moment in history, and

our world is engulfed in conflict of a very new and terrible kind. But

it is remarkably consoling to come together today in unity, and we are

certainly in bipartisan unity, on a resolution taking note of some very

important accomplishments in the quest for freedom in the near east.

This resolution is cosponsored by the gentleman from California (Mr.

Lantos) as the ranking Democrat on the Committee on International

Relations; the gentleman from California (Mr. Hunter), the chairman of

the Committee on Armed Services; the gentleman from Missouri (Mr.

Skelton), the ranking Democrat on that committee, as well as myself.

And that sponsorship should indicate the fact that there is agreement

on the very important points made in this resolution. There is a new

sovereign interim Iraqi government that is assuming power. Provincial

governments are governing, courts are dispensing justice, political

parties are forming, civil society is emerging, and independent media

is operating, and preparations are being made for nationwide elections.

The interim Constitution states that Iraq's system of government will

be republican, federal, democratic, and pluralistic and that federalism

will be based on geography, history, and the separation of powers, not

on ethnicity or sect.

On July 1, a new day will dawn on Iraq's future. Iraq will no longer

be about the United States and its occupying role. Rather, it will be

about the new self-governing Iraq and the decisions Iraq's leaders will

be making in order to further the democratic ideals and principles.

This resolution, as I say, is bipartisan. It congratulates the

interim government of Iraq on its forthcoming assumption of sovereign

authority. It expresses its gratitude to the United States Armed Forces

on their valiant service to their country, expresses its gratitude to

the families of United States Armed Forces personnel, especially

families of those who have lost loved ones. It expresses its

condolences to the families of the innocent Iraqis who have been killed

or wounded. It expresses gratitude to the coalition forces, the

Coalition Provisional Authority, the Iraqi Governing Council, the

current Iraqi cabinet government officials, and the many international

bodies and voluntary organizations which have come to the aid of the

people of Iraq.

It offers continued support to the U.S. Armed Forces, civilians

associated with the U.S. Government, coalition forces, Iraqi security

forces, and all of the people who are collaborating and making Iraq a

new and democratic state.

So this is something that I cannot imagine anybody not being proud to

vote for. And I look forward to an affirmative vote.

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

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

I want to thank the gentleman from California and everyone who has

participated in this debate. As the gentleman from California said,

robust debate is a hallmark of democracy and we have had that here. I

have strenuously tried to keep politics out of this because I am so

pleased this is a bipartisan resolution and truly it is one that is

appropriate because it is a magnificent achievement to have a country

such as Iraq under a dictator, a tyrant, turn into a working democracy

where they are going to have free elections and have all of the

additional assets that go with a democracy. I think it is a joyous

occasion and one that no matter our differences we ought to be able to

join in congratulating them.

Mr. Speaker, we did not start this war. On September 11, 2001, some

people declared war on us and committed an act of war. Does anyone

doubt if they had access to nuclear materials they would have used

them? And then we would mourn the deaths of 3 million people, not 3,000

people. Does anybody doubt for one minute that chemical and biological

warfare agents, if available to these people, they would not use them?

They could poison an awful lot of water systems in this country and

paralyze this country. War is different today. It is not declared. They

do not put uniforms on and march in formation. They sneak up on you in

the dark and stab you in the back. And so if you wait for the smoking

gun, you might find one of your major cities is the smoking gun.

The fact that Libya threw its cards on the table and said we will not

pursue weapons of mass destruction is glossed over as though that was

not a substantial achievement. The fact that weapons of mass

destruction have not been found in Iraq does not mean that they were

not ever there or that there were not programs to develop these things.

And the history of Saddam Hussein is one that indicates he would use

them in a minute given the opportunity.

We are in a terrible war. We cannot win a war like this unless we are

unified. I would ask all of us, Republicans and Democrats, when we

start to argue this issue, think. Is what we are saying going to help

us or not help us in this struggle that may last for generations? It is

very important, because we all have children and grandchildren whose

future ought to be a prime concern. Everything in this resolution is

nonpartisan. It is praiseworthy. It recognizes one of the great

accomplishments, the transformation of a country like Iraq into a

functioning democracy and setting the example in that region of the

world. And so let us join hands and acknowledge this accomplishment and

join the Iraqi people in celebrating their new democracy.