Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the

customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr.

McGovern), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume.

During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the

purpose of debate only.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday was an extraordinary day not only in the

history of Iraq but the history of the world. We saw the third free and

fair election take place in the country of Iraq, and for the first time

in the history of that nation we saw the people of Iraq choose their

own leaders.

On January 30 of this year, there were many people who thought it

could not happen, there were many terrorist attacks, and it actually

was slow in coming. As you will recall, the pictures that we saw of

voting stations where early on no one voted, but ultimately 8.5 million

Iraqis voted to put into place a coalition government that was charged

with the task of fashioning a constitution, a constitution that would

work to bring together the very disparate factions that exist within

Iraq, the three that we know of, the Shia, the Sunni, and the Kurdish

populations, and of course the other divisions that exist in the

country.

Mid-summer, we saw the work on that constitution proceed. We saw the

August date approach. There were problems, difficulties. And then we

saw the October 15 election rapidly approach, and people from all over

the world, including leaders of the U.S. forces there, were uncertain

as to whether or not the Iraqi people would in fact ratify their

constitution.

Mr. Speaker, we saw a 64 percent voter turnout, roughly 10 million

Iraqis voting, and 78 percent of the people of Iraq from throughout the

country among all of those three disparate factions within the country

came together and overwhelmingly, with a 78 percent vote, ratified that

constitution. The existence of that constitution called for

parliamentary elections to take place, and for, as I said, the first

time in the nation's history we yesterday saw the Iraqi people choose

their own leaders, a 275-member parliamentary assembly.

Mr. Speaker, we do not know yet the exact outcome of that election,

but there are a number of very important things we do know about

yesterday's election. We thought that there would be wide-ranging

terrorist attacks, when in fact there were very few if any difficulties

with the election at all when it came to attacks. We saw something that

came as a great surprise to so many people, and that was a 70 percent

voter turnout.

Mr. Speaker, 11 million Iraqis voted in this election. If one looks

at where it is that we are headed, it is an amazing testament to what

the United States of America and our Coalition Forces have done.

We, as a body, strongly support our troops; and we, as a body,

strongly support the mission of our troops.

Mr. Speaker, what I would like to do, at this point, is share with my

colleagues the resolution that, if we approve this rule, will be

considered. It is a resolution introduced by the very distinguished

chairman of the Committee on International Relations. And I should say

parenthetically that our thoughts and prayers are with Chairman Hyde

right now as he is going through a very difficult situation in his

family. But in his absence, I know that from the International

Relations Committee our colleague from Miami (Ms. Ros-Lehtinen) came

before the Rules Committee last night and testified on behalf of this

resolution; and she was joined by the distinguished ranking member of

the Committee on International Relations (Mr. Lantos).

The resolution reads as follows, Mr. Speaker: Expressing the

commitment of the House of Representatives to achieving victory in

Iraq.

Whereas, the Iraqi election of December 15, 2005, the first to take

place under the newly ratified Iraqi constitution, represented a

crucial success in the establishment of a democratic constitutional

order in Iraq.

And whereas, Iraqis who by the millions defied terrorist threats to

vote, were protected by Iraqi security forces with the help of United

States and Coalition Forces.

Now, therefore, be it resolved that:

1. The United States House of Representatives is committed to

achieving victory in Iraq;

2. The Iraqi election of December 15, 2005, was a crucial victory for

the Iraqi people and Iraq's new democracy and a defeat for the

terrorists who seek to destroy that democracy;

3. The House of Representatives encourages all Americans to express

solidarity with the Iraqi people as they take another step toward their

goal of a free, open, and democratic society;

4. The successful Iraqi election of December 15, 2005, required the

presence of U.S. Armed Forces, U.S.-trained Iraqi forces, and Coalition

Forces;

5. The continued presence of United States Armed Forces in Iraq will

be required only until Iraqi forces can stand up so our forces can

stand down, and no longer than is required for that purpose;

6. Setting an artificial timetable for the withdrawal of United

States Armed Forces from Iraq, or immediately terminating their

deployment in Iraq and redeploying them elsewhere in the region, is

fundamentally inconsistent with achieving victory in Iraq;

7. The House of Representatives recognizes and honors the tremendous

sacrifices made by the members of the United States Armed Forces and

their families, along with the members of Iraqi and Coalition Forces;

and,

8. The House of Representatives has unshakable confidence that with

the support of the American people and the Congress, the United States

Armed Forces, along with the Iraqi and Coalition Forces, shall achieve

victory in Iraq.

That is what House Resolution 612 says, Mr. Speaker; and it is very

clear to me that an overwhelming majority of the House of

Representatives will be supportive of this effort.

Now, I think that it is important for us to also look back at a

number of the charges that have been leveled over the past couple of

years. There was no strategy, no plan for victory in Iraq. We have

constantly heard that from many over the past several months. I got, as

I know all my colleagues did, this 35-page document that was put

forward by the President as he began his campaign in the past several

weeks to enlighten the American people on what our strategy for victory

in Iraq is.

Now, there are many who believe that this is some great revelation,

but the lead page of this 35-page document, Mr. Speaker, refers to a

speech that was delivered 3 weeks, actually about 3\1/2\ weeks, before

we began our military engagement in Iraq.

In February of 2003, President Bush said as follows: ``The United

States has no intention of determining the precise form of Iraq's new

government. That choice belongs to the Iraqi people. Yet, we will

ensure that one brutal dictator is not replaced by another. All Iraqis

must have a voice in the new government, and all citizens must have

their rights protected. Rebuilding Iraq will require a sustained

commitment from many nations, including our own. We will remain in Iraq

as long as necessary and not a day more.''

Now, that was stated by President Bush on February 26 of 2003, and I

commend this document to my colleagues, in which it refers to the fact

that we have seen extraordinary achievements take place since we began

our effort in Iraq. The impact that it is having on the region is

underreported. The positive salutary effect of what the United States

of America, the Iraqi Security Forces, and our Coalition Forces have

done has had, I believe, an extraordinarily positive impact on nations

like Egypt that for the first time in its history held, as I was told

by the defense minister of Egypt, because of what we have done in Iraq

they held multicandidate elections; in Lebanon where we have seen

people, because of what we have done in Iraq, standing up for the cause

of freedom say that they will give their lives to ensure that the

Syrians do not control their country. So throughout the region we are

seeing very important developments.

Mr. Speaker, it is also important to note that we continue to live in

a very dangerous world, and that region of the world is particularly

dangerous. All one needs to do is look at the statement made most

recently this week from Iran's leader about the continued quest towards

undermining the cause of freedom and liberation and democracy.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution makes it very clear. We congratulate the

people of Iraq. We underscore the fact that the Iraqi Security Forces,

the United States of America and our Coalition played a critical role

in finally bringing about the self-determination which the people of

Iraq are now enjoying; and it makes it clear that the region is still a

very dangerous spot on our globe and that any kind of artificial

timetable that were put into effect calling for our withdrawal would

undermine the tremendous successes that we have been able to see over

the past nearly 3 years and, I believe, could jeopardize the future of

these people who are just now getting a taste of the kind of freedom

that we take for granted.

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

Mr. Speaker, as I listen to these statements made about

public opinion polls, I would like to point to my colleagues the ABC

News poll about which my friend referred. Seventy-one percent of the

Iraqis polled said that their lives were very good or quite good; 61

percent reported the security situation is very good or quite good in

the area where they reside; 64 percent said they expect their lives to

be much or somewhat better a year from now.

I know that my friend from Ohio is introducing a resolution, he spoke

about it earlier today, talking about the independence and the Iraqis

making a choice as far as our presence. The Iraqi President, Jalal

Talabani, made it very clear in an editorial that he wrote in the Wall

Street Journal. He said:

``A timetable will aid the terrorists and tell them that all they

have to do is wait. Military plans must be flexible. We should have the

suppleness to respond to the often-changing level of terrorist

threat.''

That is not an American military leader making that statement. That

is the President of Iraq.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield 3 minutes to the very

distinguished chairman of the Republican Study Committee, my friend

from Columbus, Indiana (Mr. Pence).

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

respond to my very good friend from California by saying, first and

foremost, there is nothing ugly and divisive about the debate that we

are about to undertake, that we are in the midst of right now, number

one.

Number two, I think it is important to note that while all of the

recommendations that were made by the minority were rejected, I have

just been given by the staff of the International Relations Committee

an outline of those two recommendations that were made. They were to

entirely delete the resolved No. 6 clause in the resolution, which was

the language that I read which says that we cannot establish an

artificial timetable for withdrawal, which is exactly what President

Talabani said in his piece, number one. And, number two, it underscored

the fact that there was a desire from the minority to change the goal

of achieving victory to establishing stability in Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is very important for us to note that there

should be, in fact, complete bipartisanship in our goal to not have an

artificial timetable complying with the request of our men and women on

the ground there along with President Talabani, as well as making sure

that we achieve victory in Iraq. Nothing, nothing, has to be divisive

about this debate. I am convinced, Mr. Speaker, that at the end of the

day, an overwhelming majority of the House of Representatives will

support this, because we want to do more than simply pat our men and

women in uniform on the back and pat the Iraqi people on the back. We

want to talk about the importance of sustaining what took place

yesterday for the future of Iraq.

I will in just a moment. We have got a limited amount of

time. I look forward to engaging my friend, but I promised the former

Secretary of State of Michigan that I would yield 2 1/2 minutes to

her. At this point I would like to do that and then would look forward

to any comments that my friend would offer.

Absolutely. I look forward to it.

Will the gentleman yield? I have yielded 2 minutes to the

gentleman. I think he still has time.

I just would like to say that I believe that the resolution that has

been brought forward is one which recognizes the directive, the call

from the President of Iraq. It recognizes the sense of the men and

women in uniform who are on the ground there. And I believe that an

overwhelming majority, and I will say to my friend, there may be some

Republicans who choose to vote against this measure. I don't know that

every Republican is going to vote in support of this resolution, but

this resolution underscores the importance of victory in Iraq.

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

respond to my friend.

First of all, let me say that as a member of the Rules Committee, I

am very proud of this democratic, small ``d,'' institution; and I am

very proud of the work of the Rules Committee. I would like to say that

in this session of Congress more amendments offered by Democrats have

been made in order than amendments offered by Republicans.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to say that as my friend talks about

ideas

being shut out, that is a mischaracterization of what has happened

here. We have come forward with a sense of the Congress resolution, a

simple resolution is what it is. I would like to share with my

colleagues, since we are talking about the process of democracy in Iraq

and the process of democracy here in the United States of America and

in the people's House, according to the Congressional Research Service,

they state on simple resolutions, ``Simple resolutions express

nonbinding opinions on policies or issues (the `sense' of the House or

Senate) or deal with the internal affairs or prerogatives of the House.

For example, they are used to establish select and special committees,

appoint the members of standing committees, and amend the standing

rules. In the House, the Rules Committee reports its special rules in

the form of simple resolutions.''

This is a simple resolution which I believe is going to enjoy strong

bipartisan support. Democrats and Republicans will, I believe, in

overwhelming numbers support this resolution which simply says, Mr.

Speaker, that we recognize the incredible sacrifice by our troops, we

recognize the incredible sacrifice and suffering that the Iraqi people

encountered under Saddam Hussein and the struggle that they have gone

through over the past 3 years. And it recognizes what has been clearly

stated by Iraq's President, by our men and women in uniform and by the

people of Iraq, and that is establishing some artificial timetable

would undermine the process of democracy.

One must look at the letter which has gotten a great deal of

attention that was sent from the number two operative in al Qaeda, Mr.

Zawahari to the lead operative for al Qaeda in Iraq, the center of

terrorism from Zarqawi. And he has said in that letter, Democracy is

coming and there will be no excuse for violence thereafter.

Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely essential that we do everything that we

can for the stability of Iraq, the stability of the region, and the

stability of the world, that we must maintain that path towards

democracy. The coalition forces, the Iraqi security forces are making

that happen.

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

respond to my friend.

I will simply say that I believe we should do everything we can to

pursue the deliberative process here. I believe that the Rules

Committee does that. We have a management responsibility. We bring

resolutions through the Rules Committee. If there is controversy, I

believe that recognizing our strategy for victory in Iraq is the right

thing to do. People in Iraq, our men and women on the ground, recognize

that.

I believe it is the right thing to do and I look forward to a strong

and overwhelming bipartisan vote in support of this resolution.

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

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

I first say to my friend from Texas (Mr. Doggett) that this notion

that we are going to stay just as long as President Bush wants us to

stay and not a day longer, well, actually, what President Bush has said

is that we will stay as long as necessary and not a day longer. And

that was part of the initial strategy that was launched on his speech

on the 26th of February 2003. And it is very, very clear that the

President of Iraq has said that any kind of artificial timetable would,

in fact, jeopardize the prospect of democracy.

Reclaiming my time, I will say that the President has

said in that speech that we will remain in Iraq as long as necessary

and not 1 day longer. That is very clear to me, and so it is obvious.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to yield 2 minutes to the very, very able

fighter for freedom, our great friend from Springdale, South Carolina

(Mr. Wilson).

Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 30 seconds, and I do so to

simply focus on the issue that is constantly raised here, and that is,

the notion that we somehow impose closed rules on every piece of

legislation.

There have been 113 rules considered on the House floor in the first

session of the 109th Congress. With the exception of those rules which

by statute or simple resolutions or appropriation continuing

resolutions, 10 percent of those 113 rules have been closed rules.

We allow for a free floor in debate. More Democratic amendments than

Republican amendments have been made in order. So we are enjoying

democracy right here in the people's House, and the people of Iraq are

enjoying the same.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I have seen these buttons that my colleagues on the

other side have been wearing, although I do not see them wearing it

this morning, but they wore them last night, that says, debate Iraq. I

just listened to a statement by my friend from Massachusetts, and I

would say what is it that we are doing right now?

We have just gone through a very rigorous debate on the Defense

appropriations process. It was considered under an open amendment

process. We have gone through the Defense authorization process, and we

have had a full debate on that. Every single day on the House floor at

least one Member stands up to outline his or her position on the issue

of Iraq. We are debating it constantly here, and it is a very healthy

and important debate for us to have.

Mr. Speaker, as I have been listening to this debate, which has been

taking place over the past hour, a name sticks in my mind. The name is

J.P. Blecksmith. J.P. Blecksmith is a young marine who was tragically

killed in one of the biggest battles in Iraq a year ago last month. It

was the battle of Fallujah, and since he died, I have gotten to know

his family, and his parents have repeatedly said to me personally, have

gone on television and said this, that in the name of their courageous

son who is a marine killed in the battle of Fallujah, it would be

absolutely reprehensible for the United States of America to cut and

run, for us to leave Iraq on some artificial timetable.

So, Mr. Speaker, today is a day of celebration. I cannot understand

why my colleagues would say that the following line is somehow

contentious. It simply says, while congratulating the Iraqi people for

this overwhelming success that they had yesterday, congratulating our

men and women in uniform and the Iraqi security forces and the

coalition forces, it says basically what President Talabani of Iraq has

said in a Wall Street Journal editorial. The resolution says, Setting

an artificial timetable for the withdrawal of United States Armed

Forces from Iraq or immediately terminating their deployment in Iraq

and redeploying them elsewhere in the region is fundamentally

inconsistent with achieving victory in Iraq.

What is contentious about that? I cannot understand why anyone would

believe, Mr. Speaker, that we cannot come together with a strong

bipartisan vote, making sure that the success that we enjoyed on

January 30 and October 15 and just yesterday in Iraq is sustained.

We know that Mr. Zarqawi has made it very, very clear that, as

democracy blossoms, terrorism will come to an end.

So let us do everything within our power to support this resolution,

to support our troops, to support the sustained victory of the people

in Iraq. I urge support of this resolution.

The material previously referred to by Mr. McGovern is as follows: