Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman of the Committee on

Rules for yielding me this time, and I rise in support of this rule and

urge my colleagues to join me in approving this resolution.

H. Res. 561 will allow the House to work its will on the underlying

resolution. It is an appropriate procedure, given the nature of H. Res.

557, which is a simple resolution. H. Res. 557 was introduced to

recognize the Iraqi people's suffering under Saddam Hussein, the

significant advancements being made in Iraq since last March, and the

courage of U.S. and Coalition Forces as they strive to bring order and

stability to the country.

The media is accurate in its reports of the difficulties that still

face U.S. and Coalition Forces in Iraq. But there are also positive

events taking place every day that deserve recognition and are largely

ignored by the media. Probably the greatest accomplishment is that the

Iraqis are returning to their lives and are enjoying freedoms that

never could have existed under Saddam Hussein. Under his regime, the

Iraqi lived in terror on a daily basis. Now, the people of Iraq have an

opportunity to shape their history as they choose. The Iraqi people

recently took their first step in shaping their future with the recent

signing of the Iraqi interim constitution into law.

Other notable advancements in Iraq over the last year include the

rise in oil production to roughly pre-March 2003 levels, the

circulation of the new Iraqi currency, and the repair of critical

infrastructure and roads. Additionally, the electricity supply has

become more stable, and many Iraqi hospitals are up and running.

The number of Iraqis that have joined the Iraqi police force, border

patrols, and army has also increased, allowing Iraqi citizens to

participate in protection of their very own infrastructure.

Iraq is still a dangerous place, not only for Iraqi citizens but also

for U.S. and Coalition Forces. I commend the U.S. and Coalition Forces

for their dedication, sacrifice, and service in Iraq; and I salute them

for helping to make our world a safer place.

The task of rebuilding Iraq will be no easy feat, and it will

certainly take time. However, I am encouraged by the positive events of

the last year, and I believe it is in the U.S.'s interest and the

world's to persevere and create a stable and democratic Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the rule so that we may

proceed to debate the underlying legislation.