Mr. Speaker, I thank the ranking member for his very

generous remarks and commend him in turn for his leadership and the

determination and dedication that he has given to human rights

throughout the world and freedom throughout the world. Having just

visited Auschwitz and having his own personal sad experience in the

deprivation of freedom, he is an inspiration to all of us. I hope that

the trip was not too painful for the gentleman from California (Mr.

Lantos), but again his courage and his determination are a lesson to

all of us, and I thank him.

Mr. Speaker, Sunday was a historic day for the people of Iraq. In the

face of violence and threats, millions of Iraqis made it clear that

they want the future of their own country decided by the ballot, not by

the bomb or the bullet. Their willingness to risk their lives to vote

is compelling evidence of the depth of their aspiration for self-

determination. Their courage commands our admiration and our respect.

The bravery of our military personnel cannot be praised highly

enough. Without their selflessness in the face of great danger, the

election could not have been held. Every American is inspired by their

courage, their patriotism, and the sacrifice they are willing to make

for our country.

Iraqis have demonstrated their desire to take responsibility for

their country's future. Our effort now should be to use the momentum

created by the election to help them realize that goal. Iraq needs to

be made more secure. Let us intensify our efforts to train the Iraqi

Army that can provide that security. The sooner we transfer the

responsibility for security of Iraq over to the Iraqis, the better.

Iraq's future depends on improvements to its economic infrastructure.

Let us accelerate the reconstruction efforts that have lagged so badly

and give Iraqis a larger stake in having those efforts succeed.

Iraq's political future depends on the involvement of all Iraqis in

the political process. Let us redouble our diplomatic efforts with

Iraq's neighbors to help create an environment in which Iraq includes

those who have thus far felt excluded.

We know that Sunday's election was but a step on the road to a stable

and secure Iraq. The American people, who have sacrificed so much for

Iraq, are owed a clear explanation by the President of his plan to end

our presence in Iraq and of the standards by which they can judge that

plan. I hope that we will hear that plan tonight in the President's

State of the Union address.

In congratulating the Iraqi people on their achievement, we also need

to acknowledge that the election should signal the beginning of a

change in our relationship with Iraq.