Mr.Speaker, I rise today to join my

colleagues in offering my warm congratulations to the Iraqi people for

the successful elections they held on January 30, 2005.

It is truly amazing to see the Iraqi people take their first steps

toward democracy. To see a people who were once slaughtered and

tormented under a brutal dictatorship take a stand and declare that

enough is enough, shows their unwavering determination in deciding

their own fate by the ballot instead of the bullet.

Despite the predictions of widespread terrorist attacks on election

day in Iraq, 60 percent of the registered voters turned out. Moreover,

the physical courage of the Iraqi people to leave their houses, walk to

the polls and cast ballots under this specter of violence speaks to the

power of democracy and their passion for freedom.

Sometimes in America, we take the right to vote for granted. No one

who watched the moving images of Iraqi men and women proudly showing

their purple-stained fingers will ever make that mistake again.

It is also important to pay homage to the thousands of brave American

soldiers, some of who lost their lives, who held the line. Let

us not forget the bold sacrifices these courageous men and women made

to liberate the Iraqi people. It is all of our hopes that this election

marks the beginning of a new chapter for the Iraqi people, one in which

they enjoy the sweet taste of the fruits of freedom, democracy and

sovereignty.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I would like to commend the sponsors and

leadership for bringing this important resolution to the floor and I

urge an ``aye'' vote.