Mr. Speaker, I want to say thank you so much to the

gentleman from Georgia for taking the time to bring this issue not only

to the Members of this body, but to the American people. Mr. Speaker, I

also want to thank the gentleman from Georgia for taking the time to

bring this incredible photograph to the floor and let us continue to

just feast our eyes on the contentment and the joy that is expressed in

this Iraqi woman's face as she has dipped her finger in that blue ink

which has become the indelible mark of freedom, which shows the world

that she, as a free woman, has exercised her right to vote. I thank the

gentleman for that.

Because we watched this take place, and what an incredible display it

was as we saw the Iraqi people stand and fight back terrorism and to

rejoice in the work that they have done. The entire nation rejoiced.

Our military men and women rejoiced with them, and I think the entire

world has gathered to offer praise and congratulations.

At the same time, it was amazing as this took place to listen to some

of the liberal leaders in Washington and around and about talk about

how important it was to not overhype these first elections. The

gentleman from Utah provided some wonderful perspective to that.

Mr. Speaker, I can understand why those on the left and some of those

that have harangued the President for months would start to feel as if

they are feeling some political heat because, indeed, I think they are.

They were wrong. They were wrong. They had too little faith in America,

they had too little faith in our military men and women, and they had

too little faith in the Iraqi people and the power and the desire for

freedom and what that would do in their country.

Some of those liberals like to say that Iraq was out of control and

that the terrorists would destroy the election, and America was losing

and that we should postpone the elections. Certainly, some like Senator

Kennedy even called for an almost immediate withdrawal of American

forces. They wanted us to tell the world that the United States did not

have the strength and the determination to defeat terrorism, and they

were wrong in every instance. This President stood tall. Our Armed

Forces did not waiver. The American people refused to yield to tyrants

and terrorists, and we watched the Iraqi people refuse to yield to

tyrants and terrorists and the pressures.

Today we know that our President was right. Despite all the doom and

gloom and despite the constant focus on every single failure that could

have possibly taken place in Iraq, despite seeing those ``two steps

forward and one step back'' as we marched towards success, we somehow

managed to hold safe and orderly elections in Iraq. And I think that

tells us all something. It tells me that the national media had already

decided in their minds that Iraq was not going like it ought to go, and

they reported everything and anything that they thought could make it

look like it was going to be hopeless. They ignored every little single

shining success. They thought that they could ignore it. They ignored

progress and heroism and they had their version of what they thought

they wanted Iraq to be. They were against the war, and they manipulated

coverage to suit their personal views.

Thankfully, the American people did not believe that national media.

They stuck with the President, and today the Iraqi people are seeing

what freedom means. Today we know that America has struck a

demoralizing blow against terrorism. We are taking valuable territory

from the terrorists. They no longer have an assured safe haven in

either Afghanistan or Iraq.

Pakistan is working with us to track terrorists. Libya has even begun

seeking diplomatic relations with the United States.

Mr. Speaker, over the past 2 years I have had the opportunity to be

in Iraq and to make friends with some folks in Iraq, and it is amazing.

We have had some of these women come here to America as we have been

there to visit with them. Some of these I e-mail with frequently, and

we have shared our vision for what an alliance can be between our

nations. Other Members of this body have joined in working with some of

these folks. It has been absolutely extraordinary. It would have been

unthinkable 4 years ago, and this is how we are going to win the war on

terrorism, is building these relationships.

In the hours just after the election, I received several e-mail

messages from some of my Iraqi friends, one in particular from an Iraqi

woman who ran for Congress, and I would like for you all to just listen

to this for a moment.

It says, ``Dear American Friends, a warm hug of appreciation from

Iraq to the good hearts in the United States. Congratulations for us

and for you on Iraqi Elections Day.

``Today we are not only free but we have stood united in democracy.

Today we marked our history with bright words of Winning the War

Against Terror Against Dictatorship. Today we won our identity in front

of a watching world. Today Iraq is for us and we are for Iraq, while

yesterday Iraq was Saddam and Saddam was Iraq.

``Today Iraq is for all: Arabs, Kurds, Assyrians, Turkomans and many

others, while yesterday we were all looking for a home of dignity,

humanity and peace.

``After all this, just tell me how can I say thank you. Thank you for

every spirit you have given from families and friends to Iraq. Thank

you for every minute you contributed from your life to Iraq. Thank you

for every word of support, for every courage moment. Thank you for

every aid, every project, every rebuild. Thank you for being the best

friend Iraq ever had. Thank you on behalf of or tortured men and women

in the prisons of Saddam.

``Thank you on behalf of all Iraqi innocents who have given their

lives for the freedom price. Thank you on behalf of next generation of

love and peace in the Middle East. Thank you and a warm hug from Iraq

to the brave hearts in America.''

Mr. Speaker, that message is for all of us. It is for our country, it

is for our President, and it is an absolutely beautiful thing. I know

some of those across the aisle will continue to criticize our every

move in Iraq; and, sadly, much of that criticism comes from the

powerful leaders of the left. But to my colleagues across the aisle who

know better, speak up, challenge your leadership, work with us in Iraq

rather than against us.

To our allies in Iraq, America says a hearty congratulations. We are

ready to stand by your side as you rebuild. We will not cut and run.

America looks forward to your help as an ally in the war on terror.

Mr. Speaker, God bless our active duty, our Reserve and our National

Guard men and women as they work to protect us all over the world

tonight.