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

consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this important resolution.

It supports the full participation of Iraqi women in the political, in

the economic, and in the social life of a free Iraq on the path to

democratic governance.

Today Iraq stands in stark contrast to Iraq under Saddam Hussein.

While Saddam Hussein's brutal regime indiscriminately slaughtered

Iraqis, the women were among the most vulnerable. The notorious

Fedayeen beheaded women in public, dumping their severed heads at their

families' footsteps. The regime used widespread rape to extract

confessions from the detainees. Saddam Hussein's legacy of terror knew

no boundaries.

In assessing the progress achieved and the U.S. contributions to the

empowerment of Iraqi women, I look to leaders such as Dr. Khuzai, who

served as a member of the Iraqi Governing Council and the National

Council on Women. After being prisoners in their own country for 35

years, Dr. Khuzai said, ``For the Iraqi women, the morale is so high

that you can't even understand it unless you go and see. We will be

grateful forever.''

I was fortunate, Mr. Speaker, to have the opportunity to visit Iraq

as part of an historic all-female congressional delegation. We met with

women from all sectors and all educational backgrounds, and the message

we heard from all of these women was very clear, that they want a say,

they want a role, they want to participate, and they want us to help

them get there.

To achieve this end, the U.S. is helping Iraqi women reintegrate

themselves into Iraqi society and to the outside world. The

administration embarked on the Iraqi Women's Democracy Initiative to

train Iraqi women in the skills and practices of democratic public

life. It also established the U.S. Iraqi Women's Network, helping to

mobilize the private sector in the United States and to link important

resources here to critical needs on the ground.

The administration continues to provide assistance and sponsors

programs that help Iraqi women develop in multiple areas, from literacy

programs and vocational training to human rights education and election

training.

Recently we saw the fruits of our efforts as countless Iraqi women

went to the polls to have their voices heard.

The resolution that we are considering here today, Mr. Speaker,

highlights the many advances of the status of women in Iraq since

Saddam's deposition, and particularly the fact that women today lead

the Iraqi Ministries of Displacement and Migration, Telecommunications,

Municipalities and Public Works, Environment, Science and Technology,

and Women's Affairs.

However, as with every incipient democracy, particularly in a country

that does not have a history of democratic governance to pull from or a

regional basis of cooperation or comparison, much more needs to be

done. It is, therefore, important for the United States Congress to

express support for the Iraqi constitutional process and share the

wisdom of our own experience by underscoring the importance of securing

equal rights for women in Iraq, in their bill of rights, and the

overall constitutional framework.

This resolution does just that, Mr. Speaker, and I thank my

colleagues, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. Granger) for introducing

this important measure, and all of our other colleagues who have worked

on this, and I highlight the assistance of the gentleman from Illinois

(Chairman Hyde), the gentleman from California (Ranking Member Lantos),

and the leadership in bringing it to the floor today.

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