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

and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I first would like to congratulate and commend my good

friend, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. Granger), our distinguished

colleague, for introducing this important resolution. I also want to

commend the chairman of our Subcommittee on the Middle East, the

gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. Ros-Lehtinen), my good friend, for

assisting in this very important debate on the Republican side.

Mr. Speaker, we have all read with dismay reports of Iraqi

constitutional drafts that diminish and derogate women's rights to the

dictates of clerics and religious law. Our country and the other

democratic countries in the coalition that continue to have their men

and women fighting for freedom in Iraq cannot now remain silent as some

seek to oppose equal rights for women in Iraq.

While the Iraqi people must decide the proper role of religion in

their society, we have been disturbed to hear reports that some are

proposing that Iraqi law would be governed by the Islamic religious

code. A country, Mr. Speaker, can be religious, yet reflect

internationally accepted norms.

When the new Afghan Constitution was adopted, although it is far from

perfect from a Western perspective, it does prohibit discrimination

against any citizen of Afghanistan, including, of course, women. The

Afghan Constitution provides that women and men have equal rights

before the law. The Afghan Constitution also endorses Afghanistan's

international obligations, which protect women's rights under uniform

international standards, all this, Mr. Speaker, in a country that is

dramatically more conservative than Iraq.

Now, fortunately, drafts of constitutions are not final text, and I

have every faith that the Iraqi people will allow good sense to prevail

on this issue before the final text is submitted 2 weeks from now.

Similar issues arose about the role of religion during the drafting

of the Transitional Administrative Law in Iraq last year. There was,

for example, considerable concern about the prospect that Islamic law

would be enshrined as the primary source of Iraqi legislation.

Nevertheless, cooler heads prevailed, and the Transitional

Administrative Law which emerged was balanced and liberal in its

nature.

In fact, as the resolution offered by our colleague, the gentlewoman

from Texas (Ms. Granger), points out, the Transitional Administrative

Law contains an article ensuring Iraqis' equal rights, prohibiting

discrimination, without regard to gender. I have faith that Iraq's

Founding Fathers and Founding Mothers next month will affirm that

wisdom from the Transitional Administrative Law.

But I think it is important, Mr. Speaker, that our House of

Representatives, speaking on behalf of the American people, affirm that

wisdom as well. It is crucial that all Iraqis know that our commitment

to their freedom and equality is unwavering and unqualified by

religion, race, and gender.

That is why I support, Mr. Speaker, this resolution very strongly,

and I urge all of my colleagues to do likewise.

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

Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, may I just say the enormous sacrifices paid by the

American people to liberate Iraq both in blood and in treasure were not

made to create a society that discriminates against women. Our voice is

clear and united. We want the women of Iraq to have equal rights with

the men of Iraq in that new unfolding and developing society. I urge

all of my colleagues to support this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.