Mr. Speaker, I rise to voice my deep concern over the

rights of women in Iraq and urge adoption of this resolution. I am very

pleased to join my colleagues, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. Granger)

and the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. Osborne) who are my cochairs in

the Iraqi Women's Caucus.

I know they share my unwavering commitment to ensuring the success of

our efforts to stabilize Iraq. As we speak, the Iraqi Constitution is

being drafted, and preliminary drafts are being circulated around

Baghdad and in the United States.

This is the real test of our efforts to bring democracy and stability

to Iraq. My colleagues and I have spent countless hours in Iraq, in

Jordan prior to the January 30 election, meeting with women candidates,

and here in Washington meeting with some of the winners of Iraqi women

whose rights are now apparently under attack from extremists in their

own country.

The attempts by fundamentalists to insert Sharia, a restrictive form

of Islamic law, into the constitution, represents an aggressive and

intolerable assault on women's rights. The current transitional

administrative law states that Islam is to be considered a source of

legislation, but not the only source, and that discrimination against

an Iraqi citizen of gender is prohibited.

But current drafts of the new constitution provide legal rights for

women as long as they do not violate Islamic law. Many Iraqi women

fear, as we do, that enshrining Sharia would sharply curb women's

rights in matters such as divorce, family inheritance, travel,

professional opportunities, and other areas.

One draft of the constitution also lifted the requirement that at

least 25 percent of the Iraqi parliament be women. We cannot allow

these drafts to be the final word on August 15. We cannot bring liberty

and freedom to only half of Iraq's population, the men.

We owe to it the American men and women in uniform who have lost

their lives and to the people of Iraq that we do all we can to protect

women's rights in that country.

Today we have an opportunity to demonstrate that Americans will stand

strong in support of Iraqi women and their efforts to fully participate

in their new democracy. I urge my colleagues to support this

resolution.